

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

# Horizon

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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THE END BEGINS IN ABOUT FIVE MINUTES BY ROY BONGARTZ

GOETHE AND THE FORMATIVE PROCESS BY L. L. WHYTE

GOETHE'S SUCCESSION BY J. P. HODIN

DEATH AND THE BAROQUE BY ALDOUS HUXLEY

FRAGMENTS OF AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY—XVIII BY AUGUSTUS JOHN

POEMS BY JOHN BETJEMAN, DAVID GASCOYNE, LOUIS KENT  
AND PETER VIERECK

PORTRAIT OF GOETHE AND REPRODUCTIONS OF BAROQUE SCULPTURE

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## COMMENT

THIS month we are able to announce to our readers that the HORIZON Index is ready. It is the work of an indexing specialist, and consists of some fifty pages in double column bound as an ordinary number of HORIZON and now available from our office, post free to any address, for two shillings and sixpence. As the edition is limited, please order now.

Here, from *Abnormality* to *The Young and the Old*, from Abraham to Zuckerman, is a record of the first 108 numbers of HORIZON (from January 1940 to December 1948) which should prove invaluable to those who possess complete or incomplete sets or who wish to track down an occasional article. If anyone has the patience further to break down the Index, many strange data could be obtained: the ratio of occasional contributors to regular ones, the periodicity of authors, the trends and fluctuations of subject, the eddies of peace and war. Let us take one series: *Where Shall John Go?*, of which seventeen have appeared since September 1943. It is interesting to notice that the series reflects nostalgia: thus six articles have appeared in December, January and February, when the desire to travel is greatest; March, April and May produced four articles (one a reply); June, July only three. No article in the series has ever appeared in August, presumably because it is the one month when John is actually away. The autumn months contribute four again. The series indicates an escapist trend to warm islands, New Zealand, Tenerife, Jamaica, Cyprus, the Barrier Reef (Ceylon is in preparation) or to the Middle East (Syria, Persia, Turkey, Egypt, Greece). India, South Africa and Australia have also been done, and Chile and the Argentine. Brazil and the other South American republics, Mexico and Central America, all the European countries, and the rest of Africa and Asia await reports on them. The vagaries of the seventeen instalments of Augustus John's autobiography are also puzzling: he comes out five times in 1941, three times in 1942, three times in 1943, and then settles down to one or two appearances, missing out 1947 completely. John appears in four consecutive Augs and three consecutive

Decembers, showing that there is an editorial tendency to regard him both as the ideal reading for our sultriest month and the best Christmas treat we can offer. John Betjeman appears in the first number as well as in the present one, moving over nine years from the racing stables of *Upper Lambourn* a few miles north to the Gilbert Murray-Robert Bridges atmosphere of Boar's Hill. Goethe, however, makes his first appearance in celebration of his bi-centenary. The flux and reflux of *Comment* reveals a minor tragedy, twelve in 1940, eleven in 1941, eight in 1942-3-4, six in 1945, it rallies to nine in 1946, falls to six again in 1947, and only four in 1948. Failing powers: militant reactionary decadence; bourgeois formalism. They all add up.

JOHN BETJEMAN  
THE OLD LIBERALS

P A L E green of the *English Hymnal*! Yattendon hymns  
    Played on the *hautbois* by a lady dress'd in blue  
    Her white-haired father accompanying her thereto  
On *Serpent* or *bass-recorder*. Daylight swims  
On sectional bookcase, delicate cup and plate  
    And William de Morgan tiles around the grate  
And many the silver birches the pearly light shines through.

\*       \*       \*

I think such a running together of woodwind sound  
    Such painstaking piping high on a Berkshire hill  
    Is sad as an English autumn heavy and still,  
Sad as a country silence, tractor-drowned.  
For deep in the hearts of the man and the woman playing  
    The rose of a world that was not has withered away:  
Where are the wains with garlanded swathes a-swaying?  
Where are the swains to wend through the lanes a-maying?  
    Where are the blithe and jocund to ted the hay?  
Where are the free folk of England? Where are they?

\*       \*       \*

*Ask of the Abingdon bus with full load creeping*  
    *Down into denser suburbs.* The birch lets go  
    But one brown leaf upon browner bracken below.  
*Ask of the cinema manager.* Night airs die  
To still, ripe scent of the fungus and wet woods weeping  
    *Ask at the fish and chips in the Market Square.*  
Here in the firs and a final sunset flare,  
*Serpent* and *hautbois* only moan at a mouldering sky.

DAVID GASCOYNE  
DEMOS IN OXFORD STREET

The Ages of the World, since Adam delved  
And Eve remained the perfect lady, still  
As innocent of culture as her spouse of apronstring,  
Having devolved, have brought us the mature  
And really average population passing by, away  
And onward down this thoroughfare, of all surely the most  
Average in any average modern capital. Oh Sting,  
Where is our Life? Where is my neighbour, Love?  
We have hardened our faces against each other's weariness  
Who walk this way; we are not bound to one another  
By bomb panic or famine and it is not Christmas Day.  
We are aware of Socialists in power at Westminster  
Who seem to be making a pretty mess of things: This evening's  
‘Star’  
Has bills that tell of scandal and enquiry  
Now being made much in the interest of the public (*i.e.* We,  
The People) by such as have its interest at heart . . .  
We too, while quite disinterested, have of course got hearts.  
The latter are as good as most; yet who would dare  
Risk giving good away each day with maybe no returns?  
Besides, we have our families to think of,  
And our families have not got too much to spare  
Of time or money, tears or trouble. Stare  
As boldly as you like into our faces, we'll not turn  
Aside out of your way. We're not the working class.

LOUIS KENT  
I. SCRIVNER

HERE he lies strawless in bed,  
    Unbudding and sapless,  
SAMUEL GARDNER.

Sure with a wheel on a shaft  
BEN WHEELWRIGHT was hapless:  
    His own stopped dead.

Gardner's Maria was daft  
 Over Wheelwright's John.  
 Under the rose she bore—  
 God pardon her!—  
 Truelove, his son.

Truelove sailed on the water  
 And drank on shore.  
 He shipped WILL DYER'S daughter,  
 Keeping her pure of all stain  
 But a sailor's son.

The boy had an eye for a stone  
 To weather the wind and rain,  
 Carving them all but his own:

BEN WHEELRIGHT  
 SAM GARDNER  
 his daughter MARIA  
 T. JONSON called  
 SAYLOR  
 and his wife  
 JOAN DIER.

I might have cut stone like my Dad,  
 Or the sea like Grandfather,  
 But I am no hand for a tool  
 Or a trade:  
 I would rather  
 Write tales, like a fool,  
 Since I do nothing well  
 But spell:

Here  
 ICHABOD SCRIVNER  
 Lies cold:  
 Straighter than any,  
 Shorter than many  
 He told.

PETER VIERECK  
THE SLACKER APOLOGIZES

'An artist is a philistine despite himself, a patriotic moralist with a bad conscience. When his art shouts "beauty", his conscience shouts "duty". Solution unsatisfactory.'—*The Manndelbaum Chronicles*.

We trees were chopping down the monsters in the  
Street to count their rings.

WHO BLESSED OUR WAR? The oak invoked: 'Within Thee  
Crush, Mother, quakingly these red-sapped things  
Whose burrowings

Wrong Thy good dirt. Kill, kill all alien kings.'

Crowned by black moss or by obscurer yellow,  
The flowerless monsters stood  
On soil-blaspheming asphalt. How they'd bellow  
Each time we hacked them—just as if their crude  
Numb root-pairs could  
Feel feeling. O Goddess, the glory of being wood!

Then games of peace. WHO WAS THE POET? I!  
I was the willow lyre.

Even the oak was silent; melody  
Maddened whole meadows like a forest-fire  
To hear my choir  
Of leaves beat, beat, and beat upon each wire

Of winds I tamed and tuned so artfully  
It seemed an artless game.

You!, weed back there!, don't think I didn't see  
You yawning. Bored? Well, try to do the same!  
What? Suddenly lame?

Come, come, step up and sing—or wither in shame.

Then crooned the crass young weed: 'Last night my stamen  
Could hear her pistil sigh.  
Though far the garden that her petals flame in,  
We touched in dreams the hour that bee flew by.  
My pollen's shy  
Deep nuzzling tells her: weeds must love or die.'

Fools. How they cheered. But wait, I set them right:

‘Verse, verse, not poetry.

Jingles for jungles: grosser groves delight  
In honey; but educated tastes decree

Austerity.

True art is bitter, but true art sets free.

‘True art—how can I serve thee half enough?

Had I a thousand sprays

And every spray a thousand sprigs, they’d sough  
For beauty, beauty, beauty all their days—

And still not praise

Not half the whirlwind-wonder of thy ways.’

At this the oak, our captain, roared me down:

‘Mere beauty wilts the will.

Why are we here? To sing and play the clown?’

The forest answered: ‘We are here to kill.’

. . . While monsters still

Defile Thy loam, while trees know right from wrong,

Forgive me, Mother, for the guilt of song.

### ROY BONGARTZ

## THE END BEGINS IN ABOUT FIVE MINUTES

ANGRY SHLAH led the slow, blackly dressed funeral procession toward the graveyard. He thought of his old mother, seventy years old, who hardly knew what life was all about. ‘Not even the first thing about it,’ he mused, feeling more excited every minute. It had been fifteen years since his own funeral, at which he had really begun to live, and since he had never seen his mother, he was rather anxious about it.

The pall bearers began a slow chant:

‘Roll out your rubber tired carriage,

Roll out your rubber tired hack,

There’s eleven men goin’ to the graveyard,

And twelve are comin’ back . . .

Arriving at the cemetery, the grave-diggers began their work after the short ceremony, and soon had lifted the musty coffin from the hole and placed it in the hearse.

Angry could hardly wait until the funeral was over to take his mother home. 'She'll be a beaut by the time she's twenty,' he thought, looking at her lined face as she rested in the box. The doctors came, pronounced her dead, and put her to bed. 'Don't excite her too much at first,' they warned him.

It was about six in the evening, just as a warm summer afternoon was dawning with promise of a beautiful day, when she first opened her eyes. 'What time is it?' she asked.

'Six o'clock, mother,' replied her son, choked with emotion. 'You're looking fine.'

'Oh, this ain't nothing. Just wait 'til I grow out of these old rags—say when I'm about forty or thirty-five. How old am I, by the way—or do you know?'

'Just seventy, according to the records down at the court-house.'

'Seventy years. Hmm. A long, long time, eh son? Uh, I didn't quite catch the name.'

'Angry, mother. Angry Shlah. And You're Effie Shlah.'

'Where's your father? Out carousing, I suppose.'

'No, no, mother. He died when he was fifty, about twenty years from now.'

'Twenty years. I would pick someone who'd leave me high and dry in my old age. I guess I'll have to rely on you, son, until he comes along. Here, help me out of bed, will you?' Angry pulled her to a sitting position on the side of the bed. 'Unh!' she exclaimed. 'These old bones aren't what they will be.'

The seasons passed: summer faded away into spring, spring into winter, and then autumn. One day a man with a briefcase came to the house. 'Mother,' called Angry. 'It's the social security man come to collect this month's pension. You must have forgot to send it in.'

'How much is it?' called Effie from upstairs, where she sat reading the paper.

'Thirty-five dollars.'

'Tell him to come back tomorrow.'

The little man looked up. 'You realize that if these payments aren't made, there will be nothing we can do about her receiving the extra two per cent of her pay when she's sixty-five and under.'

'Yes, yes, I know,' said Angry, paying the man from his billfold. 'Makes it hard on a person, this bureaucracy.'

'You'll never regret it,' the man assured him. 'Why, she'll only be paying the pension five years, and then all the rest of her life, as long as she draws some kind of pay, she'll be getting that extra money.' He turned to leave, and passed the paper boy coming up the walk.

'Hello, Mr. Shlah. Here's your twenty-eight cents for this week. Have you got your paper handy?'

'Just a minute, Bobby.' Angry went upstairs and took the paper away from his mother.

'Wait 'til I finish this crossword, Angry. What's a four-letter word for . . .'

'Now, be reasonable, mother. Bobby has a whole route to collect, and he can't wait for just one customer.'

'I don't see what he's in such a rush about.'

'He has a deadline to meet. After he's got all the papers from the porches, he has to get them down to the press so they can run them through and make pulp out of them. They ship all the pulp to Canada for forest fertilizer.'

'Oh, all right. I wish we had a paper boy who wasn't so damned prompt.'

Angry took care of the paper boy, and then went out to back the green hydra-matic Oldsmobile from the garage. 'I've got to be getting back to the office,' he told his mother.

'Angry,' she called. 'I'm not going to have that car around here. I've told you before, and I'm not going to go on like this. Mr. Prouef has some lovely new model A Fords in, so get right down there now! You can get at least half the value on a trade-in.'

'Oh, all right, mother. I'll go down to see Mr. Prouef. Wouldn't a new Essex do just as well, though?'

'Angry, boy, must you always be behind the times? And get rid of that car radio, too.' She turned and stamped irritably into the house. 'Car radios in this day and age,' she fumed.

As the years went by Angry and his mother got used to their simple life together. Effie passed sixty-five, and was getting her extra two per cent from her picture-frame washing business. She even had a neon sign outside the house:

'EFFIE'S FRAME LAUNDRY'

'Mother, that sign outside—well, I don't like to say anything, but don't you think it's rather old hat?'

'I like it all right. What's the matter with it?'

'Down East they've already replaced almost all the electric bulbs with gas light. And here we are still using neon.'

'But that red glow is pretty,' protested Effie. 'It isn't as if I still hung on to those old fluorescents in the living-room. We've got the latest in horsehair filament bulbs now, you know.'

'But right out under everybody's nose, mother. People will begin to laugh at us. Remember when I traded-in the Oldsmobile, just to please you?'

'Oh, you win, you win. Old things are never good enough for this modern generation. I'll have it replaced by an old shingle tomorrow.'

'You're a good sport, ma,' smiled Angry. 'Just for that I'll throw you to a show down at the Rialto. This is the last week for silent pictures, you know. Getting a magic lantern in next Monday.' Arriving at the theatre, Angry asked the girl in the box-office, 'Is the show on now?'

'The end begins in about five minutes.'

'Good. We'll wait. I hate to come in just as the beginning is ending. Spoils the whole picture for me.'

'Me too,' remarked his mother, watching the people coming out of the theatre hand in their tickets at the box-office to get their twenty-five cents.

Several years later, as Effie became younger and her face less lined, another funeral took place in the Shlah family, and after a few days the event they had been waiting for finally happened.

'Come in here, son,' called Effie from the bedroom. 'I want you to meet your father.'

'Hello, Dad,' said Angry, looking at a heavy, grey-haired man of fifty.

'Well, well. So you're my son, eh? How old are you, boy?'

'Thirty, Dad. Be twenty-nine in just three weeks.'

'Thirty years old, eh? Never guess it to look at you.' He stretched and yawned deeply. 'Let's have a look round the place, Effie. Might's well get used to things right off.'

So Mr. Cole Shlah joined the household, caught on to his doornail business, and followed time down its awkward,

uneventful path. Finally, on Angry's eighteenth birthday, a decision had to be made.

'Son,' said Cole, 'it's high time you were off to school. You missed out on college, but no son of mine is going to lack a high school education, at least.'

'But mother thinks I should work a few more years down at the foundry. I got plenty time yet for school.'

'Nope, Angry, you're going to school. Effie! Oh, Effie!' He paused, and getting no reply, bellowed, 'WIFE!'

'What is it?' called Effie, coming into the room.

'Angry tells me you think he should keep working instead of going to school. I won't hear of it!'

'Now, honey-bun, let's talk it over. There's no hurry about his going to school right away. He's got eighteen years yet,' Effie argued.

'Don't "honey-bun" me!' he roared. 'You might as well make up your mind to it; he's going! *Somebody's* got to think of his future. Why, in five years, what will his friends think of a boy of thirteen who talks like an eighteen-year-old?'

And Angry went to school, too. Coming home after his first day in the twelfth grade, his father asked him what had happened.

'I like it all right, dad, but it's not going to be easy. I have to forget two whole chapters in calculus for tomorrow, and Monday we have to be ready for biology lab. We're going to put together a dissected frog and make it live or something.'

'I don't see anything so difficult about the forgetting part.'

'It's not so easy, though. Little things just stick in my mind, and I can't get rid of them. Like the date the Boer war ended.'

'When was that?'

'Uh. I forget.'

'You see? Nothing to it. You're making me proud of you, son. Why I'll bet you'll be at the foot of your class in no time. . . . What's that you have there?'

'Oh, this? An apple from the teacher.'

Days went by: night faded into afternoon, afternoon into noon, and then morning. Angry completed school, skipping the fourth grade on his way to the third, he forgot so well.

Several years later, Effie, a beautiful pale girl of twenty, lay in bed with her infant son. She looked at him querulously. He was one day old. And tomorrow . . .

[Reprinted by kind permission of the editor of 'Points', Paris]

*L. L. WHYTE*

## GOETHE AND THE FORMATIVE PROCESS

Nobody understands that the formative process is the supreme process, indeed the only one, alike in nature and art...

GOETHE here points to the most general and the most neglected characteristic of natural process: the development of spatial forms, evident equally in inorganic and organic processes and in human behaviour. The frustration of the human intellect mainly arises from its failure to recognize that the formative aspect of process holds the clue to the unity of nature, i.e. to the existence of one universal form of process of which all particular forms, such as 'material' and 'mental' processes, are special expressions.

Exact science, being based hitherto on the search for quantitative invariants which persist unchanged beneath the flow of appearances, has inevitably neglected the formative aspect. Hence the abstraction, difficulty, and irrationality of contemporary physics, and the division of science into departments whose relations remain obscure.

Systematic philosophy has also neglected it, because ever since Plato it has been widely assumed that only the permanent is real, and that the intellect cannot penetrate beyond the interaction of polar opposites to identify the actual character of process. The field of historical development has thus been left free for dialectical theories which deny the formative process in the human individual.

So it was natural that a poet should be the first fully to escape the western bondage to permanence and to recognize, however dimly, that all natural processes are variants of one universal formative process. Goethe felt intuitively that conceptions such as growth, development, and the reproduction of characteristic forms, are richer than those expressing mere permanence, which is but the residue left where there is no progressive one-way development. A theory of formative processes can include the theory of quantity and conservation as a special branch where the formative component is negligible. In Russellian terms, the asymmetrical relations of science are more comprehensive than the corresponding symmetrical relations, to which in limiting cases they reduce.

Entelechy is one-way tendency unrelated to structure, and mechanism is structure without one-way tendency. The actual phenomenon is neither, but one-way tendency revealed in developing structures, in the formation and transformation of spatial patterns. Goethe was two hundred years ahead of his time in this knowledge, and in being vividly aware in his own nature of the formative tendencies of universal nature.

The human intellect will acquire a new vitality when Russellian analysis has been applied to fertilize Goethe's intuition. Fortunately this immaculate conception does not require the consent of the parents. For Goethe would have fought shy of such a union, in the mistaken belief that the Gestalt and the mathematical methods are irreconcilable. Here we reach the limits of his wisdom.

J. P. HODIN

## GOETHE'S SUCCESSION

We cannot, by thinking, by the writing of a book, by working out an idea, alter the course of things immediately. On the other hand, it is not as though we had merely drawn figures in the sand, some activity undertaken for the sheer sake of escaping from the restless ego. But just as it evolved from an inner necessity, so too it will be in harmony with an external necessity. We build a basis on which to interpret our doubts and fears and undo our errors, in order to set out into active life again with new faith and new strength.

### THE DEHUMANIZATION OF LIFE

*The most important thing, however, is always the contemporary element, because it is most purely reflected in ourselves, as we are in it.*—GOETHE

If one wished to describe the present state of mankind in a parable, nothing could be more appropriate than one that we all know, here given in somewhat changed form: 'And they went up over all the countries, and rested in all the borders; very grievous were they, before them there were no such creatures as they, neither after them shall be such. They covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did change every thing of the land; and there remained not any healthy thing, either tree or herb of the field, through all the countries of the world.' One human being preys upon the other, one class upon the other, nations destroy each other and all mankind insatiably goes on digging into the bowels of Nature. Nature they can only regard as something to be brutally exploited. Everyday life is joyless and despairing, imbued with a soulless spirit of production in which work is robbed of its creative meaning and man's soul withers up. The cause of this state is the dehumanization of all our conditions. We feel the inevitability of the catastrophes to which such a state of mind must lead, catastrophes in which we shall all be involved, with or against our will. There is hardly any historical parallel to such an enslavement and humiliation of man—not merely of one class—such an impoverishment of soul and mind. We say this in spite of a certain admiration, mixed with horror, for the results of scientific and technical progress. The problem is

not a new one. Nor is it the same as that older, indeed everlasting problem, the unchangeability of human nature; it is really the problem of evil, arising out of this nature, not restrained by any humane considerations, conditioned only by greed and fear, egoism and destructive urges, evil that is steadily increasing, at an appalling speed, until now, through science, which has opened up a source of unlimited energy to an overpopulated earth, it has become a menace to civilization and even to the essence of life itself. This is probably the reason—and this is something that we, whose childhood lies beyond the First World War, are only really beginning to realize today—why we drank in with a holy zeal the melancholy poison of the last generation's poetry; for in that way we set ourselves, like the poets, outside that development, which we instinctively rejected even before we were capable of recognizing it intellectually. So we undermined the resources of health, which shoot up, fresh and vigorous, in every child as in every young tree. There is a line of Rilke's the melody of which surrounded us like incense. Now the music of it has fled and all that remains is the bare skeleton of the words, pallid as bones in moonlight: 'Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr'. (Who has no house yet will never build one now.) In those days we still had the strength to experience the beauty of it in spite of its truth. But the baneful development was steadily going on. The ground loosened up by melancholy we then manured with scepticism, morbid doubts and an urge towards the dissolution of all values and traditional ideas. We were still strong enough. The threads linking us to hope and confidence, as to an activity that ennobles all things, the threads linking us to creation, were still not snapped. Through the deafening roar of the machines we continually heard the still, small voice of our own inner being, and the miracle of life gleamed indestructibly as through a veil of smoke. But in difficult moments the accusation was beginning to loom up: It is the writers' fault that we are so wretched. Was it really their fault that the whole of life was developing in a direction so hostile to life? Of course not! We loved them, after all; and it was our own life in them, in Baudelaire and Verlaine, Hamsun and Jacobsen, Multatuli, Maeterlinck, Dostoievsky and Rilke. Their melancholy was the atmosphere we breathed, their revolt was what armed us for the fray. We still had the courage to reject Stefan George's pessimistic vision of the

future. 'Why cheat them with delusions,' he said, 'the end of time has set in. For sheer horror men have lost the strength to live. They lie in their thousands in the streets and throughout the country, incapable of resisting the thought of doom . . . There seems to be a plague raging among us, and no remedy avails . . . Even now some of us are turning aside towards those sombre areas and lauding madness, others are shutting themselves up in their cottages, full of sorrow and hate . . .' Was there no way out? Oh yes, there was! The mere awareness of it was enough—the changing of the conditions of life, the removal of economic exploitation, the classless society! This gave the youth of Europe their one slogan between the two World Wars; and they reached out for it as for deliverance. And what the young so easily overlooked in their eagerness to make everything different and better was the bloody revolutions, the steely dictatorships, that narrow gateway through which mankind had to pass in order to be saved. And saved from what? From the baneful consequences of a materialistic, heartless spirit, by a system that elevated materialism, mechanistic science, the state and the machine to the rank of a divinity? In those days we read in Goethe that *only the understrappers* would *come to the top again*, that *only the mob* would become *the despot to the mob*. Liberty and equality *can be enjoyed only in the surgings of madness*. *Man is not born to be free*. When Goethe saw all relationships, even those of friendship, destroyed by the *baneful, disembodied party-spirit* and took up arms against every generalizing slogan, saying: *What is the general? The particular case. Humanity? That is an abstraction. From time immemorial there have only been human beings and there always will only be human beings*—then youth protested. *Never in my life did I care to set myself up in hostile, futile opposition to the sweeping tide of the many or of the dominant principle*, Goethe wrote, and we refused to take it seriously. That was not 'reality'; those were the thoughts of an aristocrat in his ivory tower. But the narrow-minded, banal philosophy of Engels in 'Anti-Dühring' was the truth for this generation that had been betrayed by its fathers. After all, they had nothing to lose but their chains—as the fine phrase went. They were drunk with the romanticism of the originator of an unromantic economico-political movement. The passage at the beginning of Marx's 'Capital' about life being transformed, as though by a curse, into dead money—that was no mere poetry,

that seemed to be truth and beauty and the future. Only the inexorable reality even before the Second World War, and then the complete disillusionment of the post-war period, brought us on to new tracks. Suddenly we saw clearly that we were, so to speak, surrounded by electrically 'live' prison-bars, delivered up to a process of being enslaved to machines, a process slow but relentless as clockwork, a process that filled eyes, mouth and ears with ashes, making us insensible to life's true values. The defensive process began to be a necessity in the fight for survival. The first step was to exert the last shreds of our courage in facing life to fight off the fears and nihilism of the immediate generation of writers and thinkers, Kafka, Jaspers, Heidegger (Kierkegaard). Their thoughts settled on our lips and hands like sticky cobwebs. There those hopeless, diseased obscurantists were, sucking out our warm blood, our very life. In league with them came the depth-psychologists, whose burrowings into the mysteries of the personality conjured up a second reign of medieval superstition. Was there nothing healthy left? Was there no way to escape from this world-rejecting melancholy, this idea born of the Christian martyr's ideal of passive suffering, except by plunging into the abysses that Nature intended to remain in darkness? There was art—modern art. The artist himself took the place of the Christian martyr. He had dethroned God and put himself in God's place; his creative acts made him 'absolutely free'. From another point of view this God-likeness looked very miserable. The artist, after all, was commercialized, like everything else, and instead of being a creator he had become—with a few exceptions—a producer of 'works of art' no longer rooted in any common cultural necessity. He flooded the world with his idols, which he brought forth from the arsenals of paranoiac self-analysis, the abstract beauty of machines, the dehumanized imagination of constructivism. All this was diseased, and yet it was supposed to be in harmony with delight in creativeness, the bliss of creating, that basic urge which Goethe was the last man in Europe to experience humanly and as a unity. *Religion, art and science satisfy man's threefold need: for prayer, for creation and for vision (Schauen); all three are one in the beginning and in the end, although distinct at the centre.* But Goethe knew very precisely what the cause of the intellectual decline was, and knew that only in decadent epochs do writers and artists become introverted and self-preoccupied, while in the great

progressive epochs the creative spirit is concerned with the external world. And without wishing to anticipate, we may ask: Did Goethe find a way out different from that of those morbid outsiders, those self-tormenting solipsists, Kafka, Dali, Verlaine, Bang, Rilke? The answer is: Certainly he did, and inevitably so, his nature being what it was. That is actually the theme of this essay. Yet a ray of light may be cast into the darkness we are compelled to describe, even at this stage, by the following quotation:

*Denn der Mensch, der zur schwankenden Zeit auch schwankend gesinnt ist,*

*Der vermehret das Übel und breitet es weiter und weiter.*

*Aber wer fest auf dem Sinne beharrt, der bildet die Welt sich.*

(*The man whose state of mind is a wavering one in wavering times increases the evil, extending it further and further. But he who firmly stands by the inner meaning forms the world to his mind.*)

Stands by the inner meaning? Yes, the very essence of life itself.

*Jawohl! das ewig Wirkende bewegt*

*Uns unbegreiflich, dieses oder jenes,*

*Als wie von ungefähr zu unserm Wohl,*

*Zum Rate, zur Entscheidung, zum Vollbringen.*

*Und wie getragen werden wir ans Ziel.*

*Dies zu empfinden, ist das höchste Glück,*

*Es nicht zu fordern, ist bescheidne Pflicht,*

*Es zu erwarten, schöner Trost im Leben.*

(*Ah yes! the eternally working principle of things moves us incomprehensibly, as though at random for our own welfare, in one thing or another, to counsel, to decision, and to achievement. And we are as it were borne to our goal. To feel this is the highest happiness there is; not to demand it is only our duty; and to await it expectantly is life's loveliest consolation.*)

In 1813, in troubled times, the sixty-four-year-old Goethe wrote in a visitors' book:

*Ich habe geglaubt, nun glaub' ich erst recht,*

*Und geht es auch wunderlich, geht es auch schlecht,*

*Ich bleibe beim gläubigen Orden:*

*So düster es oft und so dunkel es war,*

*In drängenden Nöten, in naher Gefahr,*

*Auf einmal ist's lichter geworden!*

*(I believed, and now I believe all the more, and however strangely things may go, or however badly, I shall remain in the order of the faithful. Gloomy though it often was, and dark, in anxiety and distress, in imminent danger, all at once everything brightened again!)*

Let us return to our own time. Does not the sun rise every day? Is not morning followed by midday and evening? Are there not still birth and love and death? We worked out a new formula, putting our time into quarantine. There was, we said, a world of human beings, surrounding us on all sides, hemming us in—and how could we escape from it?—and there was a world of creation, from which we were kept away by human beings with their now senseless bustling, their ant-like whirl of activity. So there was a dualism, with only a faint notion of a possibility of bridging it. And where was this possibility? Not yet in the consciousness, but in the dynamic force in each of us, which was beginning to assert itself in self-defence. One could 'feel' what was wrong, but one could not change it. And one could not 'shell' one's life out of the encasing whole. And then came the inevitable. Before one can conquer one's enemies, one must know them. It was the study of scientific works that first really showed the full extent of the human error from which we are all suffering and took the life out of dialectical materialism, which had seemed to be the only solution that could bring salvation and was in fact only a variation of the same intellectual disease under which our life was languishing. There were two certainties, negative, admittedly, but solid as two pillars. The writers who had alienated us from life were to blame, the idealists were to blame, and so were the religious dogmatists of a beyond, who had weakened our will to action to such an extent that it broke down in the clash with reality. They were as much to blame as mechanistic science, which robbed life of joy; they were to blame just like industrialism run amok, which, with its spirit of competition, brought only annihilation and the dehumanization of all life-processes. Where now was a way to get out of the dark labyrinth of the present so that good geniuses might inspire us with new strength?

*Die ihr dies Haupt umschwebt im luft' gen Kreise  
Erzeigt euch hier nach edler Elfen Weise,  
Besänftigt des Herzens grimmen Strauss,  
Entfernt des Vorwurfs glühend bittre Pfeile,  
Sein Innres reinigt von erlebtem Graus.*

*(All you who hover in an airy circle round this head, deal now here in all good fairies' fashion, allay the heart's grim strife, remove reproach's red-hot bitter arrows, purify his inner being of the horror he has endured.)*

Then we might once more feel goodness and confidence in ourselves and in the future, to begin a new life, like Faust at the beginning of the second part of the tragedy:

*Des Lebens Pulse schlagen frisch lebendig,  
Ätherische Dämmerung milde zu begrüssen.  
Du, Erde, warst auch diese Nacht beständig  
Und atmest neu erquickt zu meinen Füssen,  
Beginnest schon mit Lust mich zu umgeben,  
Du regst und rührst ein kräftiges Beschlissen,  
Zum höchsten Dasein immerfort zu streben.*

*(Life's pulses beat now with fresh life, gently saluting an ethereal dawn. You, Earth, were constant in this past night too, and at my feet breathe refreshed and new, beginning to surround me even now with delight, starting and stirring a vigorous resolve ever to strive towards the highest life there is.)*

So long as any of us can still really experience such a thing, so long as it is still possible for a tree to burst out suddenly in manifold beauty and the affirmation of life to bud again in the heart—we are not lost. But before we come to a new blossoming of those human values that we can take for granted we must hoe, plough, manure and prune with loving care. Literature today, the true literature, is this ploughing, this hoeing, this pruning. For this reason too we must first lay bare the philosophic and scientific roots of our human failure, before we arrive at the appalling ethical consequences. And even on the way we shall have a glimpse of the greatness of that mind in the understanding and imitation of which the present-day world can find support and guidance—Goethe, perhaps the most important intellectual phenomenon in the history of European man. Nietzsche called him 'the event without a succession among the Germans'. Yet in many marked minds of the present day, as it seems to me, he has been the initial cause of a process of regeneration, the final result of which is still too remote in the future to be seen. For the laws of natural growth are those of a slow, organic process, and only what grows naturally will bear fruits—not what is organized and constructed, quickly and rationally spread by propaganda.

## THE GUILT OF PHILOSOPHY

*To investigate what is, and not what suits us.—GOETHE*

In the Eleatic school of philosophy in Greece we find the seed of that dualism that has disintegrated Western thought like an incurable splitting of the mind. It was then, about two thousand five hundred years ago, that Xenophanes became mistrustful of the human senses as a source of knowledge. The only compass given to man, the senses with which he can orient himself in the world, were regarded as of dubious reliability. And now we can see this view becoming more and more firmly established, like an hereditary vice as it passes from generation to generation. Parmenides speaks of two sources of human knowledge, and in Plato the process is organized into a system. There is a phenomenal world and an ideal world. The things of this world, which are perceived by our senses, have no genuine existence. They are always changing, but never exist; their existence may equally well be called non-existence. What we perceive by means of the senses is like shadows in a cavern, cast on the walls by a light to which our backs are turned. Since then the philosophers have not been concerned with what Nature has to say to man, but they have constructed systems dealing with the question of the relation between human experience and this world of appearances. The intellect became completely darkened when Platonism was joined by Christian philosophy, which, with its contempt for the world of the senses and its belief in a beyond, was actually a popularized form of Platonism. It turned out to be heavier-laden with destiny than Platonic philosophy itself. The fathers of the church used it to gain control over Western man's emotional life. And even today this unnatural view of the reality of the world prevails in many circles. Aristotle put the main emphasis on Nature as an integral form of being, on reality as the sum of all perceptible phenomena. Only in the human mind, he taught, not outside it, can ideas lead an independent existence. Aristotle was an obstacle to Christian philosophy, which therefore reinterpreted him as intending to have said that the human mind was not supposed to seek creative ideas in reality—for these were God's revelation to man—but only to confirm them. Augustine made the unbridgeable dualism of God and man a matter of dogma: 'Unwaveringly we will believe that the thinking soul is

not of the same nature as God, for God permits of no such communion, but that the soul can receive illumination through partaking of the divine nature.' Thomas Aquinas, in his attempt to curb all critical thinking, bound up revelation and reason so closely that the highest truths given to man in revelation and human knowledge have a joint frontier where they merge into each other, i.e. at the stage where revelation, descending to man, and reason, mounting to God, meet—or in other words, where the doctrine of salvation and human knowledge meet.

When European man began to seek the truth according to his own resources (Bacon of Verulam, Descartes), Western thought was already so infected that nothing appeared but ever new variations of the Platonic-Christian pattern. Although Bacon did lay stress on the external phenomenal world, which was new, the idea that man deciphered from it, the living and effective force in it, was for him only subjective, existing only as a notion and not in reality. (Platonic dualism.) So European man went blindly groping on. Descartes, on the other hand, decreed that only human thought had the force to produce convictions. *Cogito ergo sum*. Not 'I live, therefore I am', but 'I am because I think'. As the perfect idea of God could not come into existence in an imperfect being, he goes on thinking, it must have been deposited in him. (Platonic dualism again.) Spinoza in his Ethics tried to sum up the total of all knowledge according to a rational system based on mathematical principles. An idea arising out of a sense-perception is to him inadequate. Scarcely a hundred years after Spinoza Hume tried to trace the source of knowledge, again, only in perception. Life and thought remained split, every time. Between God and man, man and Nature, body and soul, idea and perception, there is a chasm. In Hume the perceptions are linked, not because there is any natural necessity but because reason has become accustomed to bringing things into relation; hence ideas are mere habits of thinking. Kant united all these philosophic streams in one mighty river. He recognizes truths that are produced by a pure thought-process and he denies experience the capacity to arrive at equally necessary truths. Hume's influence, furthermore, becomes apparent in the fact that the ideas do not originate in experience, but that thought adds them, as it were, to experience. So the world of experience is subjective, produced within, not objective, perceived by the subject in the

external world. The mind is incapable of knowing anything about things *an sich*, in themselves. Man is not concerned with things, but with the impression that they make on him. Religious prejudices also play a part. If things in themselves are beyond the reach of human knowledge, how could the idea of God and the other Christian notions come into the sphere of what can be comprehended by reason? Rudolf Steiner, in his attempt, written in 1897, to give a philosophic view of Goethe, traces the evolution of Western philosophy in the manner sketched here. He concludes that there was an antithesis between the Christian-idealistic view of the world current in the time when Goethe was growing to maturity and Goethe's own intellectual attitude, which evolved organically out of his own being, a natural process. Steiner's other Goethe-essays cannot be dealt with here. The fact that, in spite of building up his own development on ideas of Goethe's, Steiner did from the very beginning feel at variance with Goethe on essential points makes it clear what a difference there was between Goethe and Steiner. The quasi-religious movement that Steiner founded, the Anthroposophy of the Goetheanum at Dornach, has little to do with Goethe, whom we want to see as a symbol of European man.<sup>1</sup> Steiner's indubitable merit remains the fact that, with Carus<sup>2</sup> as his point of departure

<sup>1</sup> Goethe felt himself to be a symbol. He wrote to Frau von Stein: *God uses me as he did his saints of old, and I do not know how it comes to me. You know how symbolic my life is.* As an old man, four months before his death, his experience of himself was quite impersonal, typical and historical: *If I may express myself with old-time familiarity, I confess frankly that in my great age everything seems more and more a matter of history. Whether something belongs to past time, in remote realms, or is going on quite near to me in space, at the present moment, it is all the same, indeed I even feel myself more and more as history.* (Letter to Wilhelm von Humboldt.)

<sup>2</sup> C. G. Carus, 1789-1869, a younger contemporary of Goethe's, doctor, anthropologist, writer and painter, had a deep understanding of the poet, whom he knew personally. Many of his most important scientific works owe their first impulse to ideas of Goethe's. Carus is regarded as the founder of modern psychology. 'The key to the understanding of the nature of the conscious life of the psyche lies in the realm of the unconscious.' Here too, Goethe showed him the way. *The best in man is formless.—I believe everything that genius does as genius happens unconsciously.—Man cannot stay long in the conscious state; he has to plunge back into the unconscious, for that is where his living roots are.* Carus was a pioneer in his essays 'Goethe, Towards a Closer Understanding', 1843; 'Goethe, his significance for our time and for times to come', 1863; and in his letters on Goethe's Faust.

he made the first systematic attempt to apply Goethe's life and thought to our time therapeutically. The fact that he then abandons Goethe makes it unnecessary here to concern ourselves with him further. That he turned Goethe's exhortation *Be a man and do not follow in my footsteps* into reality suggests his strength. But we need Goethe pure and pristine. Steiner recognized Goethe's unique quality, his achievement in clearing away all ancient errors and creating a new, healthy and integral view of the world for himself by means of a free and original penetration into reality. Goethe, who had a subtle sense of living creativeness in Nature itself, was impervious to the Platonic distinction between idea and experience. He felt himself one with Nature; he did not confront it mistrustfully, as something alien. *It is by the strokes of the pendulum that time is ruled*, Goethe says, *and what rules the moral and scientific world is the alternating movement between idea and experience*. However, the idea in Goethe's sense is something different from what it is for Kant. For instance, Goethe himself reports of his intercourse with Kantians: *Although they did listen to me, they could not answer nor in any way advance the discussion. More than once it happened to me that one or the other confessed, with smiling admiration: That was, admittedly, an analogy of Kantian conception, but a strange one.* The anthropologist Dr. J. C. August Heinroth, a contemporary of Goethe's, perfectly summed up the nature of Goethe's way of thinking. Goethe noted: *Herr Dr. Heinroth speaks favourably of my nature, work and influence, indeed he describes my mode of procedure as a peculiar one, saying that my faculty for thinking functions objectively (gegenständlich). By this he means that my thinking does not separate itself from its objects and that the elements of the objects, the views, are absorbed into it and utterly permeated by it, so that my beholding is itself a kind of thinking, my thinking itself a kind of beholding (Anschauen).*

These words give us only a glimpse of how great and new Goethe's conception of the world was. It can only be seen clearly from a significant selection of dicta from his poetic and scientific works, as well as from letters, conversations, notes and epigrams, as contrasted with our own errors. The most important thing Steiner did in contributing to a new view of Goethe was to point to the importance of his scientific thought. Here too he followed in Carus's footsteps. Steiner says: 'Nobody can dive into the depths of Goethe's art if he does not know Goethe's observations

of Nature.' In his studies of Nature, from the very beginning, Goethe experienced quite naturally and directly the fact that the world of ideas is nothing other than the creative, active force in Nature, which man perceives through his senses and his thought. *The primal phenomena are not abstractions but fundamentally living entities, ceaselessly in an inner process of creation.* So the fatal dualism between God the Creator and creation itself was, for him, non-existent.

*Was wär' ein Gott, der nur von aussen stiesse,  
Im Kreis das All am Finger laufen liesse?*

(*What would a God be who only gave a push from outside, making the universe spin like a hoop round the tip of his finger?*)

Man and creation were to be comprehended as a unity: *Everything that is in the object is in the subject.* Goethe was definitely hostile to philosophers and theologians whenever they crossed his path. Recently, in a pretty apostolically Capuchinish declamation of the Zürich prophet's, I came across the senseless words: 'Everything that has life lives by something outside itself', or something to that effect. That is the sort of stuff such a converter of the heathen will dash off, and when he revises what he has written his guardian angel does not even tug at his sleeve.—You consider the Gospel . . . the most divine truth. Not even a clear and distinct voice from heaven could convince me that water burns and fire quenches, that a woman can conceive without a man or that a dead man can rise and live again. On the contrary, I consider this a great blasphemy against the greatness of God and his revelations in Nature. . . . He who will deny that Nature is divine revelation might as well deny all revelation and be done with it. . . . Jacobi<sup>1</sup> on the Divine gave me no pleasure. How could I welcome the book of a friend whom I love so sincerely, when I found it stating the thesis that Nature conceals God? With my pure, deep, inborn and acquired way of seeing things, which has taught me to see God in Nature and Nature in God, so that this way of thinking forms the basis of my whole existence, must not such a curious, one-sidedly narrow statement for ever put a distance between me, in mind, and this noblest of men, whose heart I honoured and loved? . . . God chastised you with metaphysics, a thorn in your flesh; me he blessed with physics.<sup>2</sup> I take

<sup>1</sup> F. H. Jacobi, philosopher, 1743–1819.

<sup>2</sup> What Goethe understands by 'physics' becomes apparent later.

*my stand on the atheist's<sup>1</sup> reverence for God and leave to you all you call and may call religion. You put your trust in faith, I mine in direct vision.*

*Schauen*, a word for which there is no exact English equivalent, which we may however call 'direct vision', was Goethe's great contribution to healthier thinking in the scientific and philosophic realms. In 1801 he wrote to Jacobi: *If philosophy is predominantly concerned with separating, then I cannot very well get on with it and can indeed say that it has done me some harm, by disturbing me in my natural course of development. But if it unites, or rather, if it exalts and assures our original feeling that we are one with Nature and transforms that into a deep, peaceful vision, with the continual syncrisis (union) and diacrisis (splitting) which we feel as divine life, then I welcome it, even though it is not permissible for us to feel such a thing.* And Goethe speaks of a natural state of philosophy. *It always seems to me that if one part can never reach the spirit from outside by entering in, the other will hardly reach objects by coming out from inside, and that therefore one always does well to remain in the natural state of philosophy and to make the best possible use of its unseparated existence, until some day the philosophers agree as to how what they have, after all, separated, may be united again.* From Italy Goethe wrote enthusiastically: *It is indescribable how happy my way of beholding the world makes me and how much I learn every day! And how almost no form of life is an enigma to me! The fact of it is, everything speaks to me and emerges into the light of day for me.* And in 1831, to Boisserée: *Direct vision of things is for me everything. Words count less than ever. Direct vision abandons itself to phenomena until they reveal their meaning. Together with this goes something else, something quite foreign to most modern scientists, as a result of which they have alienated science from life and life from human beings. One cannot get to know anything except what one loves, and the more profound and more complete the knowledge is to become, so much stronger, more intense and more alive must be the love, nay, passion.* That is the human element that Goethe was thoroughly proud of having introduced into thought and research: *that I introduced the subject, the receptive, perceptive organ, into physics.* Science, he said (1822), had made the tremendous mistake of setting itself in place of Nature. For Goethe *everything that we call invention or discovery, in the higher sense, is the significant application of an original sense of truth, which,*

<sup>1</sup> Spinoza, whose pantheism, with its conception of the unity of God and the world, meant a great deal to Goethe.

having long been quietly coming to perfection, unexpectedly, with the speed of lightning, leads to fruitful understanding (*Erkenntnis*). It is a revelation from within that develops in the external sphere . . . It is a synthesis of world and mind. Besides the human element in Goethe's *Schauen* there is an artistic element; one may indeed say that no thinker's and scientist's work can be beneficial unless he has a higher kind of vision and the fertility of spirit that is proper to genius. As Goethe says: *Anyone who faithfully follows the course of a higher knowledge (Erkenntnis) and intuitive understanding (Einsicht) cannot fail to notice that experience and learning (Wissen) can progress and be enriched, but that thinking and real understanding do not become more complete in anything like the same measure.* This has a quite natural cause: learning is infinite and accessible to anyone who looks around at all curiously, but contemplation, thought and combination are something confined within a certain circle of the human faculties, in such a manner that perception (*Erkennen*) of the phenomena confronting us in the universe, from the fixed star to the smallest form of microscopic life, can become ever more distinct and detailed, while real intuitive understanding of the nature of these things is impeded by its own nature, and to such an extent that not only individuals but whole centuries move in a perpetual circle from error to truth and from truth to error. In this idea of *Schauen* the religious, artistic and scientific elements are preserved as a unity, the justification for which lies in man's integral personality. So Goethe's philosophy eliminates any further dualism. If Nature, the eternally creative, the Idea, God, or whatever it may be called, wanted to conceal itself, it could not be 'beheld' (*angeschaut*). And here we may perhaps quote Goethe's profoundest conviction: *The highest of all things would be to understand that everything concrete is already theory . . . It is essential not to try to go behind phenomena; they themselves are the doctrine.* Or again, Goethe sums up the identity of man and creation by saying that *Nature proceeds according to ideas, in the same way that man pursues an idea in everything that he sets about.* We find this notion of identity in Indian philosophy too; only there it is bound up with passivity and a denial of life. This too was a youthful phase undergone by those of us who are now in our forties. A wave of Asiatic passivity and negation of life, emanating from Indian and Chinese philosophy, Brahmanism, Buddhism and Taoism, linked up with Christianity and European pessimism and had a paralysing effect. Goethe's

unity of man and creation is of the profoundest importance for man's moral welfare, for the control of his fears, for overcoming the evils of present-day science. *I noticed that the old controversy was being renewed as to how much our personality and how much the external world contribute to our spiritual existence. I had never distinguished between the two.* And in criticism of Kant, Goethe said that he regards the subjective perceptive faculty itself as the object, sharply, although not quite correctly, isolating the point where subjective and objective coincide.

This sense of unity is still more profoundly expressed in Goethe's poetry:

*Wär' nicht das Auge sonnenhaft,  
Die Sonne könnt' es nie erblicken.  
Läg' nicht in uns des Gottes eigne Kraft,  
Wie könnt' uns Göttliches entzücken?*

(*If the eye were not sunny it could never glimpse the sun. If God's own strength did not lie in us, how could the divine delight us?*)

Why is this unity so important to us? What does it mean? It is the natural, naturally conditioned communion between man and creation, with man considered as one of the vibrations in creation, not only apparently but really one with it. If one felt that, how could one feel fear of death or fear of the historical evolution of things, since one would necessarily regard them morphologically, i.e. historically and as conditioned by their form,<sup>1</sup> not subjectively and moralizingly—how then could one fail to have confidence in the eternal forces? And does that not mean, ultimately, freedom? Seeing Nature as something perpetually distinct from himself, the forces of Nature as something alien and hence hostile, man feels that he is subject to determination and hence unfree. But if he experiences the forces of Nature as Goethe did, as vibrations of the same spirit that works within himself, then he feels the untrammelled carefreeness of the child—real freedom. As Goethe puts it: *Those who come to understand my writings and, indeed, what I stand for as a whole, will have to admit that they have attained a*

<sup>1</sup> Morphology was a new science founded by Goethe, new not as a subject, but as to approach and method. It is the doctrine of the form, formation and transformation of organic bodies. From it there later developed a theory of *Gestalt*, the science of the law of forms and their development within the scope of object and meaning, its method being to arrive at pictorially integral entities by means of comparative experience.

*certain inner freedom.* (1831, to Chancellor von Müller.) In Goethe's juvenile essay on Nature, which, even although it may not have been directly his own work, yet definitely represents his views at that time, we find: *We are enclosed in it, incapable of extracting ourselves from it.* For Goethe that was not a cause for despair. On the contrary: *It has put me in and it will lead me out again. I entrust myself to it. It may have its way with me, for it will not hate its own handiwork.*

In order to arrive at this truly felt unity of man and creation, which is alien to the dissociated man of the present day, even although he may appreciate it purely intellectually, man must ponder this question meditatively. The entirely natural result will be man's humility in creation, his reverence for Nature and the significance of life. His stifled power of appreciating the beautiful will begin to revive. Dr. Alexis Carrel, the author of *L'homme, cet inconnu*, concludes his book with the words: 'Nous devons libérer l'homme du cosmos créé par le génie des physiciens et des astronomes, de ce cosmos dans lequel il a été confirmé depuis la Renaissance. Malgré sa beauté et sa grandeur, le monde de la matière inerte est trop étroit pour lui. De même que notre milieu économique et social, il n'est pas fait à notre mesure. Nous ne pouvons pas adhérer au dogme de sa réalité exclusive. Nous savons que nous n'y sommes pas entièrement confinés, que nous nous étendons dans d'autres dimensions que celles du continuum physique. L'homme est à la fois un objet matériel, un être vivant, un foyer d'activités mentales. Sa présence dans l'immensité morte des espaces interstellaires est totalement négligeable. Cependant, il est loin d'être un étranger dans ce prodigieux royaume de la matière. Son esprit s'y meut facilement à l'aide des abstractions mathématiques. Mais il préfère contempler la surface de la terre, les montagnes, les rivières, l'océan. Il est fait à la mesure des arbres, des plantes et des animaux. Il se plaît en leur compagnie. Il est lié plus intimement encore aux œuvres d'art, aux monuments, aux merveilles mécaniques de la cité nouvelle, au petit groupe de ses amis, à ceux qu'il aime. Il s'étend, au delà de l'espace et du temps, dans un autre monde. Et de ce monde, qui est lui-même, il peut, s'il en a la volonté, parcourir les cycles infinis. Le cycle de la Beauté, que contemplent les savants, les artistes, et les poètes. Le cycle de l'Amour, inspirateur du sacrifice, de l'héroïsme, de renoncement. Le cycle de la Grâce,

suprême récompense de ceux qui ont cherché avec passion le principe de toutes choses. *Tel est notre Univers.*<sup>1</sup>

These are fine words, the words of a humanist. They express a modern biologist's wish-dream. But how is it to be realized? Carrel has nothing to suggest. And we have grown so tired of words! For in this age of printer's ink and propaganda even well-meant words have been prostituted as never before.<sup>1</sup> Goethe knew and showed us the answer in his life; but the scientist of our own times has no ear to hear.<sup>2</sup>

What the scientist generally wants from Nature is to exploit her, trick her, control her and use her for his own purposes. *Nature and art are too great*, Goethe wrote to Zelter,<sup>3</sup> *to be used for any ends*. And again: *The attitude that a living being comes into the world for certain purposes, and that its form is determined to those ends by a purposive primal force, has hindered us in the philosophic consideration of natural things for several centuries now and is still hindering us, although some individuals have been vigorous in combating this attitude . . . It is, if one may so express it, a trivial way of seeing things, and it is trivial precisely because, like all trivial things, human nature finds it comfortable and adequate*. And then, very decisively: *Every creature its own purpose*. The modern scientist has no respect for Nature, he knows no limitations, no fear. What a fine sense Goethe had for the limits that Nature sets where man is concerned. *Man is not born to solve the problems of the universe, but, instead, to try to find where the problem arises and then to keep within the limits of the comprehensible. In Nature there is the accessible and the inaccessible. These should be carefully distinguished and borne in mind—with reverence*.—*Faced with primal phenomena we feel a*

<sup>1</sup> Goethe once said: *I should like to give up talking altogether. I should like to speak as Nature does, merely in signs.*

<sup>2</sup> Exceptions only confirm the rule. When Albert Einstein spoke of his 'religiosité cosmique, qui ne connaît ni dogmes ni dieu qui seraient conçus à l'image de l'homme,' he raised the question: 'Comment la religiosité cosmique peut-elle se communiquer d'homme à homme, puisqu'elle ne conduit à aucune idée formelle de Dieu ni à aucune théorie? Il me semble que c'est précisément la fonction capitale de l'art et de la science d'éveiller et de maintenir vivant ce sentiment parmi ceux qui sont susceptibles de le recueillir . . . La plus belle chose que nous puissions éprouver c'est le côté mystérieux de la vie. C'est le sentiment profond qui se trouve au berceau de l'art et de la science véritables.'

<sup>3</sup> Intimate friend of Goethe's old age, Berlin composer. Their correspondence is of great beauty and profundity.

kind of awe amounting to fear. Sensual men take refuge in astonishment. But the next moment the busy pandar intellect comes along, trying, in its well-known way, to convey the noblest and the basest in one.—The highest that man can attain is astonishment, and when the primal phenomenon astonishes him, he should be content. It cannot yield him anything loftier, and it is not for him to seek further beyond this; here is the boundary-line. But the sight of the primal phenomenon generally is not enough for human beings; they think there must be some way of going on from there, and they are like children who, when they have looked into a mirror, immediately turn it round to see what is on the other side. The feeling of happiness that so many of us felt when we first heard of the uncertainty principle in modern physics, meaning, in fact, that the modern scientist has a glimpse of the limitations to his own knowledge and must put up with it, can only be measured by the fear pervading this time, as a result of science's lack of reverence. Which of us does not feel dismay? That explains why André Gide wrote in His Journals: 'Seuls les conversations avec Goethe (Eckermann) parviennent à distraire un peu ma pensée de l'angoisse' (24 June 1940). Gide keeps coming back to Goethe. Even in the first volume of his Journals (1889–1912) Goethe is quoted, more fully then between 1923–31 and, significantly, most of all in the Journals 1939–42. It should not surprise us to find him writing: 'La grande influence que peut-être j'ai vraiment subie, c'est celle de Goethe'. In the foreword to the seventh edition of his book 'Goethes Lebenskunst', Dr. Wilhelm Bode says: 'A Munich psychiatrist once wrote telling me that he prescribed this book for his patients'. In a new attempt to give an inward portrait of Goethe, in his 'A Study of Goethe', 1947, which is so agreeably free from the German sentimentalism of Bode and the biographer Bielschowsky, Professor Barker Fairley writes, in the foreword: 'The introspectiveness that he (young Goethe) endured and finally mastered must not be regarded as the mark of a bygone day, but rather as the fore-runner of an age not yet terminated in which introspectiveness was to be one of the characteristic trends. The special appeal in our time of abnormally introverted figures like Hölderlin, Rilke, Kierkegaard, Kafka and others<sup>1</sup> may serve to remind us how near we still are, whether we like it or not, to Werther and to Tasso.

<sup>1</sup> cf. J. P. Hodin, Memories of Kafka, reflections on the problem of decadence, HORIZON, January 1948.

To this extent Goethe's problem is our problem or part of our problem; we cannot afford to ignore it.<sup>1</sup> There are words towards the end of Professor Fairley's book which seem to me to confirm my own ideas; I find them even more important than those in the foreword. For here is the conjecture 'Whether he may not prove to have a wider and a more immediate bearing on the betterment of the world', a conjecture that Carus answered in the affirmative only a few decades after Goethe's death.

The mature Goethe, who has achieved inner balance after a hard struggle, was in very decisive opposition to everything diseased, decadent, nihilistic and pessimistic. He avoided it as though it were a plague. The great secret of his personality is the capacity to array the elements of life, strength and fertility against the destructive forces in his own psyche and in his environment and so always to maintain inner harmony. So he conquered time with eternity and personal fate with the idea of necessity, accepting reality and not letting himself be tricked by any illusions. He lived in reality, and for him reality was the whole, not only the 'difficult' present, but the whole of creation. His defensive attitude to Kleist is well known and has often been made the subject of reproach. But anyone fighting for his own balance, as in our time, must reject the Kafkas, Hölderlins, Bangs and Rilkes as Goethe did Kleist.

*Was Euch nicht angehört,  
Müsset Ihr meiden.  
Was Euch das Innre stört,  
Dürft Ihr nicht leiden.  
Dringt es gewaltig ein,  
Müssen wir tüchtig sein.*

*(What is not your own you must leave alone. What disturbs your inner being you must not tolerate. If it forces its way in, we must be valiant.)*

It is a matter of recovering health, of being healed. We who were brought up only on things melancholy, tragic, schizophrenic and paranoiac, nihilistic and disharmonious, and who learnt to recognize truth and value only in such things, must first of all learn to understand the health and beauty of man as Goethe conceived of him. What is at stake is the classic and the healthy, as opposed to all that is romantic and dislocated. Goethe specifically referred to romanticism as diseased. What is at stake, what must

be achieved, is the affirmation of life, and meaningful activity, which leads to such an affirmation. *Longing vanishes*, Goethe says, *in work and action. . . . Where there is enough to be done, no room is left for aimless contemplation. For we are dependent on life and not on contemplation. The intellect is incapable of doing anything towards healing mental disease, the mind cannot do much, a great deal can be done by time, and resolute activity can do everything. . . . For the efficient man this world is not mute—so why need he go roaming out into eternity?* And in the West-Eastern Divan he speaks of the *daily observance of difficult service*.

Und nun sei ein heiliges Vermächtnis  
Brüderlichem Wollen und Gedächtnis.  
Schwerer Dienste tägliche Bewahrung  
Sonst bedarf es keiner Offenbarung.

Werdet ihr in jeder Lampe Brennen  
Fromm den Abglanz höhern Lichts erkennen,  
Soll euch nie ein Missgeschick verwehren,  
Gottes Thron am Morgen zu verehren.  
Da ist unsers Daseins Kaisersiegel,  
Uns und Engeln reiner Gottesspiegel,  
Und was nur am Lob des Höchsten stammelt,  
Ist in Kreis um Kreisen dort versammelt.

(And now let there be a sacred bequest to fraternal will and memory. Daily observance of difficult service—there is no need of any other revelation. If in the flame of every lamp you can recognize, in awe, the reflected glory of a higher light, then no ill fate will ever forbid you to honour God's throne in the morning. There is our life's imperial seal, for us and angels a sheer mirror of God, and even what can only stammer forth praise of the Highest is assembled there in the circle of the circles.)

Ever again Goethe attacks narcissism and introversion. *Man has really been set into the midst of a real universe and endowed with such organs that he can recognize and produce the real and, incidentally, the possible. All healthy human beings are filled with the conviction of their own existence and of the existence of all things around them. Yet there is also a blind spot in the brain, i.e. a place where no object is mirrored, just as in the eye itself there is a point that does not see. If man becomes particularly aware of this and concentrates on it, he becomes a prey to a sickness of the mind, has forebodings here of things of another world which are*

actually non-things without either content or limit, empty realms of darkness that frighten him who cannot tear himself free, haunting him worse even than spectres. . . . *My medium is the plastic!* he exclaims. *I have only tried to make the world and Nature clear. And now these fellows come, raise a dust, show me things now in the distance, now oppressively close at hand, like ombres chinoises—the devil take it!* (1826). Goethe admits that without a pathological interest he could not succeed in working out tragic situations. *And so I have tended to avoid them rather than seek them out.* . . . *Admittedly I do not know myself well enough to know whether I could write a genuine tragedy, but the mere thought of setting about it does dismay me and I am almost convinced that I might destroy myself in the mere attempt.* 'It is from Rome, out of the midst of deeply rich and magnificent life', so Chancellor von Müller reports, 'that the first serious maxim on renunciation dates, something that he practised throughout the whole of his later life, finding in it the only sure guarantee of inner peace and equilibrium.' So renunciation stands beside productivity and belief in the eternity of life—*I am eternal, for I am*, which one may compare with the rationalist's *cogito ergo sum*—and in the Mothers. *The Mothers! Mothers! How strange it sounds.* With the intellect alone one cannot come near the miracle of life, cannot engender homunculi, artificial mannikins bred in test-tubes. *The intellect (Verstand) cannot reach right up to her (Nature).* *Man must be capable of rising to the highest level of reason in order to touch the hem of the divinity that is revealed . . . in primal phenomena.* . . . *The divinity is at work in all that is animate, but not in the inanimate; it is in all that is evolving and undergoing transformation, but not in what has reached completion and rigidity.* So the mind (*Vernunft*) too, in its inclination towards the divine, has to deal only with what is evolving and alive; the intellect is concerned with what is complete and rigid, and with making use of that. Modern biologists still do not seem inclined to believe this. There is evidence of that in the mathematical formulae and physicists' views in Erwin Schrödinger's 'What is Life?', 1944, which, significantly enough, has quotations from Goethe at the head of three of the seven chapters. Goethe portrayed this type of scientist in Wagner, Faust's famulus.

*Wer will was Lebendiges erkennen und beschreiben,  
Sucht erst den Geist herauszutreiben.  
Dann hat er die Teile in der Hand,  
Fehlt, leider! nur das geistige Band.*

(*He who wants to comprehend and describe something living first must drive the spirit out of it. Then he has the parts in his hand, only, alas! the spiritual links are gone.*)

For Goethe life was always the great, astonishing miracle, which he always regarded with reverence. He once asked himself: *Who knows whether man as a whole may not be a throw of the dice aimed at something higher?* Hence, too, came his conviction of the personality's being constantly renewed, always changing. *I had to give up my life in order to be.* And the celebrated lines:

*Und solang du das nicht hast,  
dieses Stirb und werde!  
Bist du nur ein trüber Gast  
auf der dunklen Erde.*

(*And so long as you have not this Die-and-become! you are only a dismal visitor upon this gloomy earth.*)

The aged Goethe was preoccupied with an idea, related to Aristotle's entelechy, of life-forces becoming embodied in man at his birth, their nature being activity, they themselves eternal. *Existence (das Sein) is eternal! No being can crumble into nothingness.* This leads on to an understanding of the full implications of what Goethe meant when he said to Eckermann: *If I remain ceaselessly active to the end of my days, Nature is under an obligation to allot me another form of existence, when the present one is no longer capable of containing my spirit.* And: *I do not doubt the continuance of our existence. May it then be that He who is eternally Living will not refuse us new forms of activity, analogous to those in which we have been tested.* Yet in all this, if it was to receive blessing, love had to have a part, the Eternal-Feminine. As Carus wrote so touchingly in his Faust letters: 'That love which is symbolized in genuine, perfect femininity is the one and only means of guiding mankind to all that is lofty; and in particular to a living comprehension of the blissful ideas of beauty, goodness and truth.' Steeped in this love, Goethe found the expression for his highest conception of mankind. Of them he said: *Those comprehensive individuals whom one might in a prouder sense call the creative ones, are in the highest sense productive; for since they always take their point of departure from ideas, they are always expressing the unity of the whole.*

We now come to the question as to how far art and science form a unity. Our own time has separated these two intellectual

realms so definitely that their possible unity strikes us as improbable and even, indeed, undesirable.

Goethe's journey to Italy in 1786, that decisive event in his life, not only gave him his inner equilibrium but brought all his spiritual resources to full bloom, maturing his classical views on art and Nature. Goethe's mind flowered freely and luxuriantly in the sunshine and culture of the south, and the secret of an integral creative principle in art and Nature was the crowning of his ideas. *The great works of art are at the same time the greatest works of Nature produced by men according to true and natural laws. Everything arbitrary and illusory collapses. There is necessity! There is God! . . . I have the surmise that the Greeks acted according to the laws by which Nature herself acts; and I am on the track of them.* (Goethe was at that time intensely preoccupied with the metamorphosis of plants.) Of the artist's style he said that it was *based on the deepest fundaments of knowledge, on the nature of things in so far as we are permitted to perceive it in visible and tangible forms.* The analytical method of science and modern art—in contrast to the idea of *Gestalt*—naturally proceeds quite differently; it refuses to recognize this kind of perceptual knowledge, the only kind adequate to man. Goethe knew that in order to comprehend the processes of life in art and Nature one must have a different kind of vision from that by means of which the manifestations of inorganic and mechanical Nature can be perceived.

Here now more detailed attention must be paid to the conception of *Gestaltung* and *Gestalt* in Goethe's thought. As can already be seen from signs today, they will only come to fulfilment again in a future science and society. As early as in his botanical studies, when he discovered a fundamental form, the *Urpflanze*, Goethe said: *It means becoming aware of form, with which Nature is always, as it were, only playing and, in playing, bringing forth life in all its multiplicity.* Form, pattern, *Gestalt*, is to him something like an element. He does not dissect it or break it up, as for instance into atoms, for then life would escape. *Gestalt* is a primal manifestation of life. Lavater, who in his 'Physiognomic Fragments for the Advancement of the Knowledge and Love of Mankind', 1775–8, claimed to decipher the character of the soul from the forms of the body, was a symbolist. Goethe, however, was even then regarding external form for its own sake, setting out to perceive its laws and formative energy. *Gestalt* is nothing rigid, for it is alive; but it is

subject to metamorphoses. And Goethe uttered a warning: *The idea of metamorphosis is an extremely venerable, but at the same time extremely dangerous gift from above. It leads into formlessness, dissolving and destroying knowledge (Wissen). It is like the vis centrifuga and would become lost in infinity, if it had not been endowed with a counterbalance: I mean the urge towards specification, the tough faculty of persistence in everything that has ever attained to a state of reality—a vis centripeta against which, in its profoundest depths, no externality can prevail.* The formative process, *Gestaltung*, that brings forth *Gestalten*, i.e. living, changing, self-propagating, self-sufficient and self-contained forms, is the really creative process of life; and this is the only thing that is true. Analysis and mechanical measuring, and weighing, splitting and dissecting, may indeed annihilate life, but they cannot bring forth life. As Goethe wrote to Zelter: *No one will realise that the highest and sole operation of Nature and art is Gestaltung, and that the Gestalt is the specification in order that each thing may become, be and remain a particular and significant entity.* Those who offend against the law of *Gestaltung*, those who do not take it into consideration, those who evade it, like modern scientists—there are no more philosophers!—offend against the most sacred law of Nature, and their activity must ultimately turn out to be hostile to life and a cause of destruction.

In 1911 the doctor and psychologist Georg Groddeck wrote in his essay: 'Hin zur Gottnatur' (Towards Divine Nature): 'Great works of art are works of Nature just as truly as mountains, streams and plains. That was said by Goethe, of course, a man himself at one with Nature, who for centuries to come will be what Homer has been for centuries past. . . . Goethe understood the great secret of life and tried to live his own life in accordance with it, to merge his separate existence in the great life of Nature. This is the reason, and this alone, why we feel him to be at once strange and familiar, cold and remote, though brimming over with energy and passion. The sole foundation of art is this power of losing one's separateness, of feeling oneself at the same time a whole and yet a part of something far greater. This power we have lost, but Goethe had it. He is a miracle in modern history even greater than Leonardo, who alone of all the moderns can claim kinship with him . . . A work of art is a work of Nature, even as the tree. There you have a devastating criticism of modern art, and though Goethe certainly did not intend the implication,

the soundness of the criticism is not thereby affected. For centuries past our greatest writers have ceased to look to the natural work for inspiration, and have limited themselves to the study of themselves and their neighbours, hoping to understand the secrets of men's souls and make their poetry out of these . . . The great writers Heine, Victor Hugo, Musset, Verlaine, Baudelaire, Nietzsche, all show the same psychological tendencies, the same weakness for personal matter, secrets of the soul, the same incapacity to step outside their own and their neighbours' affairs . . . Goethe is in himself a proof that neither in drama nor in epic or lyric poetry need there be individual characters, for no one surely would maintain that Faust had a personality, or Egmont, Klärchen or Gretchen . . . they are types, or, if you like, representatives of mankind . . . Shakespeare's people, on the other hand, are all definite individuals, sharply delineated.'

And finally, the following words quoted from Groddeck are here aimed not only at artists but at scientists and technologists: 'Could but the vain European who has for so long looked upon himself as the lord of Nature be brought to know that though the world truly is round, he does not stand at its centre, then would life again be worthy and the world once more seem fair.'

#### THE GUILT OF SCIENCE

*Only what is fruitful is true.*—GOETHE

*Nature becomes mute when put to torture.*—GOETHE

From criticism of philosophy let us now pass on to criticism of science. Its general outlines appear nowadays in every more considerable work on sociology, social philosophy and psychology, in biography and even in art history. If we here keep to Professor A. N. Whitehead's lectures, published under the title 'Science and the Modern World', it is only for the reason that they give a full and dignified statement of the development of science, its nature and results. It is a great book, not because it suggests ways out of our dilemma—it could not achieve a really revolutionary view of things, since Whitehead was a convinced Platonist—but for the lucidity with which the problems are apprehended and the defects laid bare. Whitehead's book has that seriousness and discipline proper to a scientist with a philosophic training, and this distinguishes it from so many similar, more journalistic attempts that

flood the book market. What is particularly interesting to us here is that every critical argument that Whitehead adduces was fully and consciously stated by Goethe one hundred and fifty years earlier. So in dealing with each problem we shall add Goethe's point of view parenthetically, in order to simplify comparison. Certainly Whitehead did not take any notice of Goethe, and indeed no scientist has. In a passage where he criticizes the materialistic basis on which scientists place their ultimate principles, he adds: 'No alternative system of organizing the pursuit of scientific truth has been suggested. It is not only reigning but it is without a rival.' To this we must retort—no! Goethe had a scientific attitude and method, he had a philosophic view and a way of life that, even if they do not amount to a 'system', yet contain, as a living tree contains all botany, all the basic ideas from which a future human science can take its bearings. Where Whitehead advances on to positive, new ground, saying: 'My point is that a further stage of provisional realism is required, in which the scientific scheme is recast and founded upon the ultimate concept of organism', that is, in other words, what Goethe himself saw in the process of *Gestaltung*—form within change. The physicist L. L. Whyte, whom the crisis in physics led to raise culture-morphological and biological questions, in his book 'The Next Development in Man' has sketched out the basic scheme of a system of unitary thought, from which he looks for a renewal of human conditions. Among the thinkers whom he quotes as representatives of his idea in various epochs, he sees Goethe as the unitary man of the eighteenth century. Of him Whyte says: 'All that is universal in him is characteristic of the periods which still lie ahead . . . Goethe stands beyond the range of personal or literary criticism because, like Socrates and Jesus, he unhesitatingly followed a vision of life which bore within it the germ of centuries to come. Like them he dared to live his vision, not in isolation but in the world of man, and to live it out to the end. The vast difference between him and them, which makes the comparison bewildering . . . arises from the fact that they heralded the dissociated man whom we know, while he foretells a unitary man who is not yet recognized.' Whyte sees clearly that Goethe 'overcame the misleading antithesis of free will and necessity', that the nature of his experience was profound, and that 'the formative principle is universal'. 'His life was unitary in that it reveals no general or permanent

conflict . . . no neurosis of dissociation, no fanaticism, or moral intolerance or anger . . . He never allowed the dualities of his nature to harden into a dualism . . . Goethe's thought . . . was of a unitary form, not because he decided that was the right way to think, but because a process of that form dominated his life and person without the distortions which mark dissociated man . . . His general approach to experience offers the first mature example of historical, as opposed to analytical reason . . . Goethe's resentment of Newton was an indication of what was to come . . .

'The sixteenth century of our era', Whitehead writes, 'saw the disruption of Western Christianity and the rise of modern science . . . The new mentality [resulting from this] is more important even than the new science and the new technology. It has altered the metaphysical presuppositions and the imaginative contents of our minds.' *Earlier centuries had their ideas in the form of imaginative vision, ours has its ideas in the form of conceptions*, Goethe said. *The great ideas of life were then seen as Gestalten, as gods . . . Then productive power was greater, today destructive power or the art of dissection . . .* The process took three hundred years to develop the catastrophic symptoms that we today can hardly keep control of any longer. The individual consequences Goethe saw as follows: *How tame and feeble life has become in these last few miserable centuries! Where do we ever now meet with a nature true and without guile?* And the general consequences: *I see the time coming when God will take no more pleasure in it (mankind) and will have to destroy everything yet once again to make way for rejuvenated creation. I am quite sure that everything is prepared and time and the hour are already ordained, somewhere in the remote future, when this epoch of rejuvenation is to begin.* Goethe does not speak of decline and fall, but of a rejuvenated creation, an epoch of rejuvenation. Whitehead also has optimistic confidence, not in man, who can renew himself inwardly and rise again, but in the rhythm in which ideas reproduce themselves. 'General climates of opinion persist for periods of about two to three generations, that is to say, for periods of sixty to a hundred years. There are also shorter waves of thought, which play on the surface of the tidal movement.' How much more profoundly Goethe saw this question than the Platonist! He knew that *moral epochs change just as do the seasons of the year . . . Everything undergoes transformation, rising and sinking, and we cannot hold it fast any more than we can the sun, moon and stars; and yet these things are not mere*

*natural events. They slip through our fingers, by our own fault or some other fault, by accident or fate, but they change, and we can never be sure of them.*

What, then, is the intellectual cause of our misery? Whitehead says: 'Thought is abstract; and the intolerant use of abstractions is the major vice of the intellect'. Mathematics, which were so alien to Goethe—*It is an undeniable truth that, however purely and safely mathematics can be handled in itself, in the field of experience it instantly and at every step becomes fraught with danger and may lead one into error, just like every other maxim put into practice, nay more, may make the error enormous and so pave the way for its own future shame*—according to Whitehead provided 'the background of imaginative thought with which the men of science approached the observation of Nature. Galileo produced formulae, Descartes produced formulae, Huyghens produced formulae, Newton produced formulae.' Whitehead sees the seventeenth century as 'the century of genius'. Francis Bacon, Harvey, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, Pascal, Huyghens, Boyle, Newton, Locke, Spinoza, Leibniz are only some of the names. Goethe suffered deeply from the consequences of their genius. *Several men of this kind dominate science, which is a sort of immense guild, always . . . becoming worse the more one neglects individual vision (Schauen) and direct thought.* Vision and direct thought kept Goethe from slipping into the wake of mathematical and materialist research. He had a far higher conception of research: *Here, first and foremost, let us admit and pronounce the fact that we . . . are in the region where metaphysics and natural history overlap, that is to say, where the serious, faithful researcher most loves to linger.* As a poet, in Faust's metaphorical descent to the Mothers, those primal, fundamental productive forces of the universe, Goethe approached a sphere in which he had learnt:

*Das Schaudern ist der Menschheit bestes Teil;  
Wie auch die Welt ihm das Gefühl verteure,  
Ergriffen fühlt er tief das Ungeheure.*

*(The capacity to shudder in awe is the best part of man's make-up. However the world may make him suffer for his feeling, he is deeply moved by his sense of what is vast and incomprehensible.)*

Which will prove right—Goethe or the seventeenth century? This question may sound ironical, since we are faced with a cultural decline that leaves modern man indifferent as to whether

he lives or dies. As Whitehead says: 'We are now so used to the materialistic way of looking at things, which has been rooted in our literature by the genius of the seventeenth century, that it is with some difficulty that we understand the possibility of another mode of approach to the problem of Nature . . . Having regard to this triumph can we wonder that scientists placed their ultimate principles upon a materialistic basis and thereafter ceased to worry about philosophy?' But how did these scientists see Nature? As Whitehead says: 'Nature was a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colourless; merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, unceasingly. However you disguise it, this was the practical outcome of the characteristic scientific philosophy which closed the seventeenth century'. Goethe's Nature is different: it is according to *her great iron laws that we must all complete the circle of our existence*.—*Everything that separates us from Nature is falsification*.—*Nature is always in the right, and the faults and errors are always man's*.—*When man's healthy nature works as a whole, when he feels himself in the universe as part of a great, beautiful, noble whole, when harmonious enjoyment gives him a sense of pure, free ecstasy, then if the universe could be aware of itself it would achieve its goal, would jubilate, admiring the peak of its own evolution and being*.

'This triumph of materialism', Whitehead says, 'was chiefly in the sciences of rational dynamics, physics and chemistry.' In the eighteenth century 'the notion of the mechanical explanation of all the processes of Nature finally hardened into a dogma of science'. Here Whitehead pulls up short, after having built up Plato's idealistic philosophy and mathematics into a solid intellectual structure. Could philosophy, he wonders, help us out of this dilemma? Scarcely, he thinks. 'The idealistic school, as hitherto developed, has been too much divorced from the scientific outlook.' Goethe knew that idealistic philosophy, with an approach to materialistic science, not only would not offer a solution but would merely bring about double confusion. But there had to be a way out, all the same. For 'a civilization which cannot burst through its current abstractions is doomed to sterility after a very limited period of progress' (Whitehead). He points to this way out: 'The point before us is that this scientific field of thought is *now*, in the twentieth century, too narrow for the concrete facts which are before it for analysis. This is true even in physics, and is more especially urgent in the biological sciences . . .'

We must take a very definite stand as regards this 'now'. For just as surely as man has been in a state of melancholy ever since the Renaissance, so surely too did Goethe clearly recognize the evil in science. It is not that the concrete facts in the twentieth century have proved the narrowness of the scientific field of thought, but that science's whole attitude was false from the very start. *No one would believe, Goethe says, how much there is in science . . . that is either dead or fatal . . . and indeed on the whole it seems to me that scientific people are activated rather by a sophistic than by a truth-loving spirit . . . There is much that we would know better if we did not try to know it so exactly.* And against this 'exactness', against the specialization of science: *This sort of treatment always seemed to be a kind of mosaic, in which one puts one finished stone beside the other, using thousands of details in order to produce the appearance of a picture; and this is more or less the reason why the demand seems to me odious.* And it is in Goethe too that we find the pronouncement that, metaphorically speaking, unfurls the problem of a *human* science: *Both microscopes and telescopes shift man's actual standpoint.* He often went so far as to be indignant. *And the living man is in the right. He has a knavish right to be worse than those who lived before us . . . The increase in mechanization worries and frightens me.—Everything is now ultra, everything is everlastingly transcendental, in thought as in action. Nobody knows himself now, nobody comprehends the element in which he lives and moves and has his being. . . . Young men are stirred up too early and then swept away in the maelstrom of the age. Wealth and speed are what the world admires and what everybody strives for. Railways, express-mails, steamships and every possible kind of facility for communication are what the civilized world is out for, to become over-civilized and so to persist in mediocrity. And another result of the aspirations of the masses is that an average culture becomes general. This is the goal towards which the Bible societies, the Lancastrian teaching-method and all that sort of thing is striving. It is, in fact, the century for the capable, for quick-thinking, practical people who, being equipped with a certain adroitness, feel their superiority over the many, although they themselves are not gifted for what is highest. Let us keep as much as possible to the mode of thought in which we grew up. With, perhaps, a few others, we shall be the last of an epoch that will not soon come again.*

The Platonist Whitehead comes to the aid of the mathematician Whitehead. The idealistic humanist is aroused, and behind the conception of biology he discovers man, even, indeed, man as

artist: 'The mechanism of God and the mechanism of matter were the monstrous issues of limited metaphysics and clear logical intellect . . . It is in literature that the concrete outlook of humanity receives its expression.' In the romantic reaction in literature he sees the 'conscious reaction against the mentality of the eighteenth century'. Here, however, we shall devote our attention to Goethe who saw in the world-rejection in the melancholy and distortion of romanticism a danger at least equal to materialism and idealism. It is Goethe's philosophy, the secret of his positive mind, rooted so deep in reality always regaining its equilibrium and affirming life, that offers us a way out. For Whitehead romanticism and idealism are 'representative of the intuitive refusal seriously to accept the abstract materialism of science'. 'English poetic literature is a witness to the discord between the aesthetic intuitions of mankind and the mechanism of science.' 'The nature-poetry of the romantic revival was a protest on behalf of the organic view of Nature, and also a protest against the exclusion of *value* from the essence of matter of fact.' This romantic literature gives him a chance to sketch out a provisional guiding-line for the future. 'I am giving the outline of what I consider to be the essentials of an objectivist philosophy adapted to the requirement of science and to the concrete experience of mankind . . . I hold that the ultimate appeal is to *naïve* experience and that is why I lay such stress on the evidence of poetry. My point is that in our sense experience we know away from and beyond our own personality.'

How was it possible, we may ask, reading this, that nobody harkened to Goethe's voice, that nobody could comprehend the profound human wisdom revealed in his kind of vision, his *Schauen*, nor believe in his warning against rationalism? *Consciousness is no adequate weapon, indeed it is sometimes dangerous to him who wields it.*

The nineteenth century only brought an advance of materialistic science and technology, a 'quick, conscious and expected' evolution that has brought us to the brink of the abyss. Nature, to which Goethe built altars, was plundered to the limit. On this score Whitehead says: 'Science, conceived not so much in its principles as in its results, is an obvious storehouse of ideas for utilisation'. The industrial revolution began in England. By 1840 —eight years after Goethe's death—biology and chemistry were established on an atomic basis, and the last twenty years of the

nineteenth century, the years of greatest material prosperity and greatest social misery, are described by Whitehead as 'one of the dullest stages of thought since the time of the First Crusade'. Society's attitude to art, science, religion and morality reached a very low level, which has since sunk still lower. What remained are merely the nineteenth-century slogans: Struggle for existence, competition, class-warfare, commercial antagonism between nations, military warfare. We have gone still further. Through the discovery of the splitting of the atom we have seen immature mankind penetrate into the inmost secrets of matter. I think every sensitive person was seized with horror when the atom bomb was used to end the Second World War, in which respect for life had already reached the lowest level ever known. Here we stand on the threshold where the irreverence of soulless twentieth-century man, who believes only in uniformity, mass-production and power, goes so far that soon we shall only be able to talk in terms of ancient allegories, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, and the Last Judgement. Nature is a living being and will shake off mankind. It will be able to defend itself against the fatal analytic rhythm of science and technology, as against a foreign body or a plague. The earth is already mutinying here and there, threatening to starve us out.

Goethe had a profound reverence for life and for mankind. Goethe still had a sense for meaningful function, for the productivity of labour and the highest productivity of all, that of genius. That is continually apparent in his writing. For instance, in *Wilhelm Meister's Years of Travel* he makes youth, scientifically trained in its professions, go through three stages of reverence in order to become maturely established in its humanity. I say 'humanity' and not 'morality', since Goethe's insistence on reverence for life is a 'natural' and not merely a social demand and he would have rejected any merely social or moral attitude as too narrow. Goethe to Lavater: *Your little bit of morality alone will not enable you to take a great view of the universe!* Since no religion, so far, had solved the problem for him—*what else are the thousandfold religions but thousandfold utterances of the healing power that is meant for the intellectual wounds dealt us by Nature?*—they must go through them all. *The general, the natural religion really has no need of belief!* An 'invisible church' is created, out of the three stages of reverence. The first stage is that of the pagan and ethnic religions, that

is, reverence for what is over us and stronger than ourselves; the second stage, the philosophic, is that of reverence for what is equal to us; and the third, the Christian, is that of reverence for what is beneath us, for whatever is afflicted by misery, suffering and death. But only all these three stages together produce reverence for ourselves, which is reverence for the divine in ourselves. Man must be productive, Goethe demands, because productivity and fertility is the essence of Nature. *To be active is man's first duty.*—*How can one learn to know oneself? Never by contemplation, but always through action. Try to do your duty and you will instantly know what you are worth.* And because man, even genius, is only a vibration in the harmony of the whole, he says: *Every productivity of the highest kind, every great thought that produces fruits, is in nobody's power. Those are things for man to consider as . . . unexpired for gifts. It is related to the daimonic principle, which overwhelms and does as it likes with him, and he yields himself up to it all unawares, believing meanwhile that he is acting spontaneously.*

Such ideas of Goethe's had a decisive influence on Albert Schweizer's philosophy of life and mode of action—one of the few real, vigorous attempts that anyone has made to extricate himself from our ignoble conditions. Schweitzer has a very clear view of Goethe's nature. In his book *Culture and Ethics*, preceded by *The Decline and Reconstruction of Culture*—a work very clearly aimed against Spengler's, even its title showing, in its polarity, how deeply Schweitzer's thought is imbued with Goethe's spirit—Schweitzer begins by stating Goethe's reverence for the reality of Nature and contrasts it with Descartes and the ethical belief in progress. 'His greatness is that he dared to stick to what is elementary in an age of abstract and speculative thought . . . For him it was an inner necessity to find a place in natural philosophy for his view of activity. The conviction that *effective action* (*Wirken*) gives the only real satisfaction in life and that there, then, lies the mysterious sense of existence' is something that Goethe expresses above all in *Faust*. Then comes Schweitzer's criticism of the age: 'The full significance of Goethe's *Weltanschauung*, with its penetration of reality, remained hidden from his contemporaries. They had no appreciation of any knowledge of the universe and of life that could not be reduced to a system but obstinately stuck fast in facts. They kept to optimism and ethics.'

Let us now return to Whitehead. He believes that 'we are

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entering upon an age of reconstruction in religion, in science and in political thought. Such ages, if they are to avoid mere ignorant oscillation between extremes, must see truth in its ultimate depth. There can be no vision of this depth of truth apart from a philosophy which takes full account of those ultimate abstractions, whose inter-connexions it is the business of mathematics to explore.' There speaks the mathematician coming to the aid of the Platonist. Goethe's idea of the fullness and unity of life is the answer here. Whitehead feels the inadequacy and so turns to life itself. He wants it to give him the answer—organic life, the organism, not matter. First he gives the following definition: 'The organism is a unit of emergent value, a real fusion of the character of eternal objects, emerging for its own sake'. We have already mentioned Goethe's *Gestalt*-philosophy. Now we come to the question whether Whitehead's definition implants a love of life in the soul of modern man. He appeals to the creative spirit: 'The other side of the evolutionary machinery, the neglected side, is expressed by the word creativeness'. (Goethe! Goethe!) 'The clash (of opinions) is a sign that there are wider truths and finer perspectives within which a reconciliation of a deeper religion and a more subtle science will be found.' But let us keep to Goethe and his testament: *The appeal to posterity arises from the pure, living feeling that there is something imperishable, and that even if it is not immediately recognized, yet ultimately not only the minority, but the majority, will rejoice in it.*

How was it that our decline could go so far? Whitehead states the crisis in religion as follows: 'During many generations, there has been a gradual decay of religious influence in European civilization'. He tries to outline a new religion: 'Religion is the expression of one type of fundamental experience of mankind: that religious thought develops into an increasing accuracy of expression, disengaged from adventitious imagery: that the interaction between religion and science is one great factor in promoting this development . . . Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind and within, the passing flux of immediate things . . . The fact of the religious vision, and its history of persistent expansion, is our one ground for optimism . . . The vision claims nothing but worship; and worship is a surrender to the claim for assimilation, urged with the motive force of mutual love.' Goethe's conception of religious feeling forms a

unity with art and science; it is the way that leads man through life, from his innate love to reverence, to astonishment and to action—not a mere rectification of dogmas by science and the worship of a vision lying beyond or behind the passing flux of immediate things.

The world has become very sombre. The scientists admit it themselves. 'The Western world is now suffering from the limited moral outlook of the three previous generations.' (Whitehead.) Goethe would not regard it merely as a problem of morality. The fiend of technique rages on. Inevitably one thinks of Goethe's ballad about the sorcerer's apprentice who set the mechanical forces in motion and then could not bring them to a stop, however much damage they might do, because he lacked the wisdom.

*Herr, die Not ist gross!  
Die ich rief, die Geister,  
Werd' ich nun nicht los.*

*(Master, I am in great extremity. The spirits that I conjured up I cannot now get rid of.)*

And then in the end the master comes.

'The progressiveness in detail', Whitehead says, 'only adds to the danger produced by the feebleness of co-ordination.' We know that it is no mere question of co-ordination of science, technology and social evolution, but one of a false spiritual attitude. 'The soul cries aloud for release into change . . . In the most advanced industrial countries, art was treated as a frivolity . . . The fertilization of the soul is the reason for the necessity of art.' So far Whitehead. But what then is to come of it? How is art to break through the antagonism to the spirit in our time, for which science and technology are to blame? And can that possibly be done by modern art, which has all the ailments of its time? Whitehead concludes on a dubious note: 'It may be that civilization will never recover from the bad climate which enveloped the introduction of machinery.' Here, in the conditional, he re-states Spengler's thesis of the decline of the West.

In spite of the reserve with which Whitehead's Platonism is here treated, it is to be wished that this book could have been as widely known on the Continent as Spengler's work, which merely further undermined spiritual energies already shattered by

the First World War and drove the Germans, with their taste for the wordy and obscure, into the arms of an utterly brutal dictatorship. How cynical Spengler's thought actually is, becomes apparent in his later work, *Man and Technique*. His greatest failing is a dilettantism that cannot subject itself to any voluntary intellectual discipline, a discipline that often becomes sheer beauty in Whitehead. Spengler merely provides us with another example of those attempts that start from ideas of Goethe's and end up in an un-Goethean realm. It was not only the morphological method that he took over from Goethe, but also the basic idea of becoming, not being, a living idea in the minds of all Europe's greatest thinkers since Heraclitus. But he made a negative use of it, while Goethe in his instinctive wisdom never lost sight of the process as a whole, the rise and fall and rise again. In its essence it is analogous to the feminine and masculine principles in Chinese thought, Yin and Yang, the one always waxing as the other wanes, or to the old Jewish allegory of the wheel, every point of which must always begin to rise again the instant that it has reached the lowest level. In spite of the fact that the motto to Spengler's work is taken from Goethe and that in it we are always running into wisdom of Goethe's, as for instance the axiom on *Gestalt*, which is *something always in motion, always in evolution, always perishing—minted form, evolving as it lives*.—*The doctrine of form is the doctrine of change. The doctrine of metamorphosis is the key to all the signs in Nature*—that is what Goethe perceived through his 'beholding', through his exact sensual imagination, his objective thinking, from all of which there grew the immediate inner certainty that Nature had a destiny and not merely a causality.

*Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis . . .  
(Everything transient's only a symbol . . .)*

Spengler 'knows' all that, because he is a man of great erudition, but he is not a sage, as Goethe was. So he mistakenly sees in Faust the evolution of Titanic man—much like Nietzsche's Superman, who is ultimately traceable back to Faust too—whereby Spengler identifies Faust with Goethe, with German, Germanic and so on, an error that has done a great deal of harm, one in which Spengler was not alone, while Carus, for instance, quite clearly recognized the daimonic nature of Faust's character and uttered a warning against identifying Faust with Goethe. The result is that in

Spengler's work we are always stumbling over a wrong conception of the 'Faustian'. He speaks of an Apolline, Magical and Faustian spiritual life, of Faustian and Apolline experience of Nature, of Faustian physics, of which the dogma is force—a particularly dangerous formulation, since in Spengler's work it coincides with the most brutal nationalistic instincts of prey—of Faustian thought in money, etc. Now all this Spenglerian Goetheanism has led us a long way from Goethe. Spengler's *Kulturphilosophie* sees machines becoming ever more 'mystical'; he regards the engineer as an 'initiate and priest', and finally he laments the fact that the white race was not clever enough to keep the secret of technique to itself in order to dominate the coloured world by this means.

## ★

No time seems to have needed Goethe as much as ours, and in none have so many attempts been made to bring him nearer to us. Even although Emil Ludwig's biography again conjures up for us the image of the Olympian, the 'human' hero, that is perhaps no bad thing in a time that has lost respect for spiritual greatness. His work is written with a freshness that, although it avoids the depths of Goethe's problems, does bring the man Goethe nearer to us—much nearer than, say, Friedrich Gundolf, whose merit, compared with the older biographers, lay in crystallizing those ideas of Goethe's which were the driving-forces of his life, and in treating them fully, summing them up. Naturally it is impossible here to discuss all the more important writings on Goethe, such as those of Simmel, Brandes, Cassirer, Leisegang and Bahr. They have little to do with our thesis. Inevitably Thomas Mann took up the challenge of Goethe in several essays. He has also worked out several important themes suggested by Goethe in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, for instance the Joseph cycle, and so created a literary Goethe tradition. He also makes Goethe his basis in novels—*Lotte in Weimar*, *Dr. Faustus*. There is one other attempt that must be mentioned here, with yet one more reminder that an arbitrary interpretation of Goethe cannot show us what we are looking for, namely understanding of Goethean man, who has experienced the laws of *polarity*—that all manifestations of life are expressed in two opposite conditions that form an inseparable unity: soul and body, dark and light, life and death, man and woman, 'to heaven exulting, grieved to very death',

meditation and action—of *intensification (Steigerung)*—that there is an ever-striving ascent going on in Nature—and of the *wholeness* of all manifestations of life; and who after the Italian journey evolved into the classically balanced free human being, always balancing the opposites anew—*Only he deserves liberty, or life, who must conquer it anew each day*—who gave a new—and to us essential—content to the secret of the Greek *ἀνθρώπος μέτρον ἀπαντών*, *man the measure of all things*, the only slogan we have to set against religious dogmas, which wrongly base morality in the transcendental instead of in the human sphere and so deprive morality of its dynamic force, those dogmas that always command us to reverence something ‘outside mankind’, such as an anthropomorphic God, who is *de facto* dethroned by the machine and money. *Man the measure of all things*, that seems to us to be the only wisdom with which we can defend ourselves against the menacing dehumanization of science, of economic and social life, the devaluation of man and his soul. *Man the measure of all things* means that everything should be measured up against the human, that everything that takes no account of man is unhuman and hence harmful.

The last attempt at an un-Goethean interpretation of Goethe that we shall mention here is by Werner Deubel, a disciple of the German psychologist and graphologist Klages; with Steiner and Carus as his basis, he claims to see the fulfilment and systematic completion of Goethe’s *Weltanschauung* in Klages’s philosophy. Deubel believes he has discovered contradictions in Goethe, which he traces back to Goethe’s ideas of the Christian-idealistic view of the world having been mixed with other, spontaneous ideas of his own. He cannot recognize the harmonizing law of balance, which forges polar, ever-renewed opposites into a living whole, but splits Goethe into two parts and, taking sides with the one, concludes that German romanticism, sombre, melancholy, Catholic romanticism, with its attempt to ‘liberate itself from the clutches of the Logos-philosophy’—the characteristic of this being dualism: mind-God/Nature, law/chaos, moral freedom/fate, consciousness and will/unconscious body-soul, etc.—follows in Goethe’s footsteps but collapses under the attack of mechanistic materialism and German idealism. Now we know enough about Goethe’s attitude to romanticism. The next revolt, in Deubel’s view, came through Nietzsche, in whose posthumous writings were found the words:

'My ancestors: Heraclitus, Empedocles, Spinoza, Goethe!' But the mature Goethe rejected the Dionysiac principle and would have felt Nietzsche as much an antipode to himself as Klages, who, although he takes as his basis certain ideas of Goethe's, Carus's and Bachofen's, goes to the other extreme and grants full validity only to the unconscious soul.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, Goethe knew the key to the riddle was balancing the unconscious with the conscious. *What would all culture be if we did not seek to overcome our natural urges?*

Certainly Goethe did use the symbol of the Mothers, which became the *leitmotiv* of Bachofen's life work.<sup>2</sup> Certainly Goethe did very definitely point to the unconscious, and found a distinguished pupil in Carus. But our modern, exaggerated, de-railed depth-psychological self-torment and romantic-nihilistic delight in the underworld must be offset by the mature, harmonious man rooted in creation and in a life of activity, the man who dams up passion with control and renunciation, in whose soul both sun and moon shine, the one bright, the other mysteriously gleaming, and in whom dreaming does not displace waking, in whose mind poetry sings and serious research has its dwelling and everything urges on to the great work. His clear ideas, matured by contact with reality, are deepened by Orphic wisdom: *Daimon—the law in which you once began is that in which you must exist—Tyche (the accidental element, chance)—You do not remain solitary, you form yourself in social activity—Eros—Many a heart floats away into generality, but the noblest heart always dedicates itself to one—Ananke (necessity):*

*Da ist's denn wieder, wie die Sterne wollten,  
Bedingung und Gesetz und aller Wille  
Ist nur ein Wollen, weil wir eben sollten,  
Und vor dem Willen schweigt die Willkür stille—*

(*There again it is, as the stars willed, condition and law and every will is all one volition, because we are meant to do it so, and face to face with this will all wanton wilfulness fall silent.*)

and finally Elpis (hope), without which there is no life.

No one else has learned from mistakes and suffering as Goethe did, and in doing so he experienced the law of succession; for

<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Klages, 'The Mind as the Soul's Adversary', 'Of Cosmogonic Eros', 'Goethe as Psychologist'.

<sup>2</sup> J. J. Bachofen, 'Das Mutterrecht'.

knowledge lies only in relating the new to the old and so rising to a higher stage of wisdom. His life was a perpetual striving to become better and nobler, and in this he endured. *What counts in the end is holding out and outlasting the others.*

The harmonization of polarities seems to be to us the most important, the decisive element, the one saving element. It is Goethe's great human bequest to us. It is the ground on which Goethe's classicism grew, in all its healthiness. 'It may truly be said', Carus, the doctor, wrote about the mature Goethe, 'that all the energies of the mind were present in equally high degree and in most beautiful harmony and that even his imagination, so lively and so creative, was restrained and kept in check by the dominance of the intellect. This was particularly so where the physical was concerned: no system, no function, had the upper hand; all worked together for the maintenance of a beautiful equilibrium.' He describes him as a 'beautifully and powerfully organized' human being. Only the later Goethe literature has revealed how consciously, austere and intensely he himself built up that organization, dominating Nature, the body, with his mind<sup>1</sup> and controlling his mode of life by his will. That is doubtless why in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* he portrayed the youth who believed he only needed to reach out for the treasures of this world and they would instantly be his. He thought he need not make any sacrifice for the sake of beauty, love, wealth, enjoyment, happiness and greatness, neither in the form of freedom nor in that of independence, not in effort, work or patience. He wanted to be master of everything and everybody, and was not even master of himself. This might be pointed out to all disillusioned idealists, to all the discontented and to a humanity that, in its attempts to overcome the unnatural frustrations of Christian philosophy, goes stumbling from one extreme to the other. Why? Because Nietzsche was an extremist, and so was Marx, and because the extreme always has devastating consequences. That is why Goethe acknowledged the liberal spirit as the truly human spirit.



<sup>1</sup> *I often suffer from complaints of the intestines, but the mental will and the energies of the upper part of the body keep me going. The mind must not give way to the body! For instance, I work better when the barometer is high than when it is low; and since I now know this, when the barometer is low I try to cancel out the disadvantageous effects by greater efforts, and I succeed.*

In order to arrive at a contemporary understanding of Goethe we must, I think, take two courses: we must consider the calamities of our situation and seek the answers in Goethe; and we must consider Goethe as a personality, as a representative of the human race, in a much wider sense than was possible for Emerson in his time. So too it seems to me that Carus's view of Goethe, in spite of being fragmentary, is that which does him most justice. Carus was the first to point to Goethe's significance for the future—not only because he felt it so, but because even in 1850 he contrasted Goethe's personality with the quite distinct symptoms of that disease of our conditions that causes us so much suffering today. Should anyone succeed in combining the profundity of Carus's view of Goethe, and the poetic warmth that raises his third letter on Faust to the rank of a work of art, with a lucid and serious grasp of our problems, he would undoubtedly make Goethe indispensable to our time.

[The literal translations of Goethe's words were made by EITHNE WILKINS.]

ALDOUS HUXLEY

## DEATH AND THE BAROQUE

'THE skeleton', as we all know, 'was invisible in the happy days of pagan art.' And invisible it remained, in spite of Christianity, for most of the centuries that followed. Throughout the Middle Ages, the knights, the mitred bishops, the ladies who warm their feet on the backs of little dogs—all are reassuringly in the flesh. No skulls adorn their tombs, no bones, no grisly reapers. Artists in words may cry, 'Alas, my heart will break in three; *Terribilis Mors conturbat me*'. Artists in stone are content to carve the likeness of a sleeper upon a bed. The Renaissance comes and still the sleep persists, tranquil amid the sculptured dreams of a paradise half earthly, half celestial.

Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance  
 Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,  
 The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,  
 St. Praxed in a glory, and one Pan  
 Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,  
 And Moses with the tables.

But by the middle of the sixteenth century a change has taken place. The effigy no longer sleeps, but opens its eyes and sits up—ideally noble, as on the Medicean tombs, or soberly a portrait, like any one of those admirable busts in their round niches between the pilasters of a classical design. And at the base, below the Latin inscription, it not infrequently happens (at any rate in Rome and after 1550) that a little skull, in bone-white marble, reminds the onlooker of what he himself will soon be, of what the original of the portrait has already become.

Why should the death's-head have become fashionable at this particular moment of history? The religiously minded might surmise that it had something to do with the Counter-Reformation; the medically minded, that it was connected with that sixteenth-century pandemic of syphilis, whose noseless victims were a constant reminder of man's latter end; the artistically minded, that some mortuary sculptor of the time had a taste for, and a happy knack with, bones. I do not venture to decide between the possible alternatives, but am content to record the fact, observable by anyone who has been in Rome, that there, after the middle of the century, the skulls indubitably are.

As the years pass, these reminders of mortality assume an ever greater importance. From being miniatures they grow in a short time into full-blown, death-sized replicas of the thing behind the face. And suddenly, imitating those bodiless seraphs of medieval and Renaissance painting, they sprout a pair of wings and learn to fly. And meanwhile, the art of the late Renaissance has become the Baroque. By an aesthetic necessity, because it is impossible for self-conscious artists to go on doing what has been supremely well done by their predecessors, the symmetrical gives place to the disbalanced, the static to the dynamic, the formalized to the realistic. Statues are caught in the act of changing their positions; pictorial compositions try to break out of their frames. Where there was understatement, there is now emphasis; where there was measure and humanity, there is now the enormous, the astounding, the demi-god and the epileptic sub-man.

Consider, for example, those skulls on the monuments. They have grown in size; their truth to death is overpowering and, to heighten the effect of verisimilitude, the sculptor has shifted them from their old place on the central axis and now shows them, casual and unposed, in profile or three-quarters face, looking up

to heaven or down into the grave. And their wings! Vast, wildly beating, wind-blown—the wings of vultures in a hurricane. The appetite for the inordinate grows with what it feeds upon, and along with it grow the virtuosity of the artists and the willingness of their patrons to pay for ever more astounding monuments. By 1630 the skull is no longer adequate as a *memento mori*; it has become necessary to represent the entire skeleton.

The most grandiose of these reminders of our mortality are the mighty skeletons which Bernini made for the tombs of Urban VIII and Alexander VII in St. Peter's. Majestic in his vestments and intensely alive, each of the two Popes sits there aloft, blessing his people. Some feet below him, on either side, are his special Virtues—Faith, Temperance, Fortitude, who knows? In the middle, below the Pontiff, is the gigantic emblem of death. On Urban's tomb the skeleton is holding (slightly cock-eyed, for it would be intolerably old-fashioned and unrealistic if the thing were perfectly level) a black marble scroll inscribed with the Pope's name and title; on Alexander's the monster has been 'stopped', as the photographers say, in the act of shooting up from the doorway leading into the vault. Up it comes, like a rocket, at an angle of sixty or seventy degrees, and as it rises it effortlessly lifts six or seven tons of the red marble drapery, which mitigates the rigidities of architecture and transforms the statically geometrical into something mobile and indeterminate.

The emphasis, in these two extraordinary works, is not on heaven, hell and purgatory, but on physical dissolution and the grave. The terror which inspired such works as the *Dies Irae*, was of the second death, the death inflicted by an angry judge upon the sinner's soul. Here, on the contrary, the theme is the first death, the abrupt passage from animation to insensibility and from worldly glory to supper with the convocation of politic worms.

Chi un tempo, carco d'amoroze prede,  
ebbe l'ostro all guance e l'oro al crine,  
deforme, arido teschio, ecco, si vede.

Bernini's tombs are by no means unique. The Roman churches are full of cautionary skeletons. In Santa Maria sopra Minerva, for example, there is a small monument attached to one of the columns on the north side of the church. It commemorates a

certain Vizzani, if I remember rightly, a jurisconsult who died some time before the middle of the seventeenth century. Here, as in the wall monuments of the High Renaissance, a bust looks out of a rounded niche placed above the long Latin catalogue of the dead man's claims upon the attention of posterity. It is the bust, so intensely life-like as to be almost a caricature, of a florid individual in his middle forties, no fool evidently, but wearing an expression of serene and unquestioning complacency. Socially, professionally, financially, what a huge success his life has been! And how strongly, like Milton, he feels that 'nothing profits more than self-esteem founded on just and right'! But suddenly we become aware that the bust in its round frame is being held in an almost amorous embrace by a great skeleton in high relief, whizzing diagonally, from left to right, across the monument. The lawyer and all his achievements, all his self-satisfaction, are being wafted away into darkness and oblivion.

Of the same kind, but still more astounding, are the tombs of the Pallavicino family in San Francesco a Ripa. Executed by Mazzuoli at the beginning of the eighteenth century, these monuments are among the last and at the same time the most extravagant outflowerings of the Baroque spirit. Admirably carved, the usual Virtues keep guard at the base of each of the vast pyramidal structures. Above them, flapping huge wings, a ten-foot skeleton in bronze holds up for our inspection a pair of oval frames, containing busts of the departed Pallavicini. On one side of the family chapel we see the likenesses of two princely ecclesiastics. Death holds them with a studied carelessness, tilting their frames a little, one to the left, the other to the right, so that the grave ascetic faces look out, as though through the ports of a rolling ship. Opposite them, in the hands of another and, if possible, even more frightful skeleton, are two more members of the family—an elderly princess, this time, and her spouse. And what a spouse! Under the majestic wig the face is gross, many-chinned, complacently imbecile. High blood-pressure inflates the whole squat person almost to bursting point; pride keeps the pig-snout chronically pointing to the skies. And it is Death who now holds him aloft; it is Corruption who, with triumphant derision, exhibits him, for ever pilloried in marble, a grotesque and pitiable example of human bumptiousness.

Looking at the little fat man up there in the skeleton's clutches,

one reflects, with a certain astonishment, that some Pallavicino must have ordered and presumably paid for this strange monument to a departed relative. With what intentions? To display the absurdity of the old gentleman's pretensions to grandeur? To make a mock of everything he had lived for? The answer to these questions is, at least in part, affirmative. All these Baroque tombs were doctrinally sound. The heirs of popes and princes laid out huge sums to celebrate the glories of their distinguished forbears—but laid them out on monuments whose emphatically Christian theme is the transience of earthly greatness and the vanity of human wishes. After which they addressed themselves with redoubled energy to the task of satisfying their own cravings for money, position and power. A belief in hell and the knowledge that every ambition is doomed to frustration at the hands of a skeleton have never prevented the majority of human beings from behaving as though death were no more than an unfounded rumour and survival, a thing beyond the bounds of possibility. The men of the Baroque differed from those of other epochs not in what they actually did, not even in what they thought about those doings, but in what they were ready to express of their thoughts. They liked an art that harps on death and corruption and were neither better nor worse than we who are reticent about such things.

The fantastic dance of death in San Francesco a Ripa is almost the last of its kind. Thirty years after it was carved, Robert Blair could achieve a modest popularity by writing such lines as these:

Methinks I see thee with thy head low laid,  
While surfeited upon thy damask cheek  
The high-fed worm, in lazy volumes rolled,  
Riots unsared.

But eighteenth-century sculptors made no attempt to realize these gruesome images. On graves and monuments Death no longer comments upon the mad pretensions of his victims. Broken columns, extinguished torches, weeping angels and muses—these are now the emblems in vogue. The artist and his patron are concerned to evoke sentiments less painful than the horror of corruption. With the nineteenth century, we enter an age of stylistic revivals; but there is never a return to the mortuary fashions of the Baroque. From the time of Mazzuoli until the

present day, no monument to any important European has been adorned with death's heads or skeletons.

We live habitually on at least three levels—the level of strictly individual existence, the level of intellectual abstraction, and the level of historical necessity and social convention. On the first of these levels our life is completely private; on the others it is, at least partially, a shared and public life. Thus, writing about death, I am on the level of intellectual abstraction. Participating in the life of a generation, to which the mortuary art of the Baroque seems odd and alien, I am on the level of history. But when I actually come to die, I shall be on the first level, the level of exclusively individual experience. That which, in human life, is shared and public has always been regarded as more respectable than that which is private. Kings have their Astronomers Royal, Emperors their official Historiographers; but there are no Royal Gastronomers, no Papal or Imperial Pornographers. Among crimes, the social and the historical are condoned as last infirmities of noble mind, and their perpetrators are very generally admired. The lustful and intemperate, on the contrary, are condemned by all—even by themselves (which was why Jesus so much preferred them to the respectable Pharisees). We have no God of Brothels, but the God of Battles, alas, is still going strong.

Baroque mortuary sculpture has as its basic subject matter the conflict, on one important front, between the public and the private, between the social and the individual, between the historical and the existential. The prince in his curly wig, the pope in his vestments, the lawyer with his Latin eulogy and his smirk of self-satisfaction—all these are pillars of society, representatives of great historical forces and even makers of history. But under smirk and wig and tiara is the body with its unshareable physiological processes, is the psyche with its insights and sudden graces, its abysmal imbecilities and its unavowable desires. Every public figure—and to some extent we are all public figures—is also an island universe of private experiences; and the most private of all these experiences is that of falling out of history, of being separated from society—in a word, the experience of death.

Based as they always are, upon ignorance—invincible in some cases, voluntary and selective in others—historical generalizations can never be more than partially true. In spite of which and at the

risk of distorting the facts to fit a theory, I would suggest that, at any given period, preoccupation with death is in inverse ratio to the prevalence of a belief in man's perfectibility through and in a properly organized society. In the art and literature of the age of Condorcet, of the age of Herbert Spencer and Karl Marx, of the age of Lenin and the Webbs there are few skeletons. Why? Because it was during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that men came to believe in progress, in the march of history towards an ever bigger and better future, in salvation, not for the individual, but for society. The emphasis is on history and environment, which are regarded as the primary determinants of individual destiny. Indeed, among orthodox Marxians they are now (since the canonization of Lysenko and the anathema pronounced on 'reactionary Morganism') regarded as the sole determinants. Predestination, whether Augustinian or Mendelian, whether *karmic* or genetic, has been ruled out, and we are back with Helvétius and his shepherd boys who can all be transformed into Newtons, back with Dr Watson and his infinitely conditionable infants. But meanwhile the fact remains that, in this still unregenerate world, each of us inherits a physique and a temperament. Moreover, the career of every individual man or woman is essentially non-progressive. We reach maturity only to decline into decrepitude and the body's death. Could anything be more painfully obvious? And yet how rarely in the course of the last two hundred and fifty years has death been made the theme of any considerable work of art! Among the great painters only Goya has chosen to treat of death, and then only of death by violence, death in war. The mortuary sculptors, as we have seen, harp only on the sentiments surrounding death—sentiments ranging from the noble to the tender and even the voluptuous. (The most delicious buttocks in the whole repertory of art are to be found on Canova's monument to the last of the Stuarts.)

In the literature of this same period, death has been handled more frequently than in painting or sculpture, but only once (to my knowledge, at least) with complete adequacy. Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyitch* is one of the artistically most perfect and at the same time one of the most terrible books ever written. It is the story of an utterly commonplace man who is compelled to discover, step by agonizing step, that the public personage with whom, all his life, he has identified himself, is hardly more

than a figment of the collective imagination, and that his essential self is the solitary, insulated being who falls sick and suffers, rejects and is rejected by the world, and finally (for the story has a happy ending) gives in to his destiny and in the act of surrender, at the very moment of death, finds himself alone and naked in the presence of the Light. The Baroque sculptors are concerned with the same theme; but they protest too much and their conscious striving for sublimity is apt to defeat its own object. Tolstoy is never emphatic, indulges in no rhetorical flourishes, speaks simply of the most difficult matters and flatly, matter-of-factly of the most terrible. That is why his book has such power and is so profoundly disturbing to our habitual complacency. We are shocked by it in much the same way as we are shocked by pornography—and for the same reason. Sex is almost as completely private a matter as death, and a work of art which powerfully expresses the truth about either of them is very painful to the respectable public figure we imagine ourselves to be. Nobody can have the consolations of religion or philosophy unless he has first experienced their desolations. And nothing is more desolating than a thorough knowledge of the private self. Hence the utility of such books as *Ivan Ilyitch* and, I would venture to add, such books as Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*.

And here let me add a parenthetical note on the pornography of the age which witnessed the rise of the ideas of progress and social salvation. Most of it is merely pretty, an affair of wish-fulfilments—Boucher carried to his logical conclusion. The most celebrated pornographer of the time, the Marquis de Sade, is a mixture of escapist maniac and *philosophie*. He lives in a world where insane fantasy alternates with post-Voltairean rationalization; where impossible orgies are interrupted in order that the participants may talk, sometimes shrewdly, but more often in the shallowest eighteenth-century way, about morals, politics and metaphysics. Here, for example, is a typical specimen of Sadian sociology. 'Is incest dangerous? Certainly not. It extends family ties and consequently renders more active the citizen's love of his fatherland.' In this passage, as throughout the work of this oddest product of the Enlightenment, we see the public figure doing his silly best to rationalize the essentially un-rationalizable facts of private existence. But what we need, if we are to know ourselves, is the truthful and penetrating expression

in art of precisely these unrationalizable facts—the facts of death, as in *Ivan Ilyitch*, the facts of sex, as in *Tropic of Cancer*, the facts of pain and cruelty, as in Goya's 'Disasters', the facts of fear and disgust and fatigue, as in that most horrifyingly truthful of war books, *The Naked and the Dead*. Ignorance is a bliss we can never afford; but to know only ourselves is not enough. If it is to be a fruitful desolation, self-knowledge must be made the road to a knowledge of the Other. Unmitigated, it is but another form of ignorance and can lead only to despair or complacent cynicism. Floundering between time and eternity, we are amphibians and must accept the fact. *Noverim me, neverim Te*—the prayer expresses an essentially realistic attitude towards the universe in which, willy-nilly, we have to live and to die.

Death is not the only private experience with which Baroque art concerns itself. A few yards from the Pallavicino tombs reclines Bernini's statue of Blessed Ludovica Albertoni in ecstasy. Here, as in the case of the same artist's more celebrated St. Teresa, the experience recorded is of a privacy so special that, at a first glance, the spectator feels a shock of embarrassment. Entering those rich chapels in San Francesco and Santa Maria della Vittoria, one has the impression of having opened a bedroom door at the most inopportune of moments, almost of having opened *The Tropic of Cancer* at one of its most startling pages. The posture of the ecstasies, their expression and the exuberance of the tripe-like drapery which surrounds them, and, in the Albertoni's case, overflows in a kind of peritoneal cataract on to the altar below—all conspire to emphasize the fact that, though saints may be important historical figures, their physiology is as disquietingly private as anyone else's.

By the inner logic of the tradition within which they worked, Baroque artists were committed to a systematic exploitation of the inordinate. Hence the epileptic behaviour of their gesticulating or swooning personages, and hence, also, their failure to find an adequate artistic expression for the mystical experience. This failure seems all the more surprising when one remembers that their period witnessed a great efflorescence of mystical religion. It was the age of St. John of the Cross and Benet of Canfield, of Mme Acarie and Father Lallemant and Charles de Condren, of Augustine Baker and Surin and Olier. All these had taught that the end of the spiritual life is the unitive knowledge of God, an

immediate intuition of Him beyond discursive reason, beyond imagination, beyond emotion. And all had insisted that visions, raptures and miracles were not the 'real thing', but mere by-products which, if taken too seriously, could become fatal impediments to spiritual progress. But visions, raptures and miracles are astounding and picturesque occurrences; and astounding and picturesque occurrences were the predestined subject-matter of artists whose concern was with the inordinate. In Baroque art the mystic is represented either as a psychic with supernormal powers, or as an ecstatic, who passes out of history in order to be alone, not with God, but with his or her physiology in a state hardly distinguishable from that of sexual enjoyment. And this in spite of what all the contemporary masters of the spiritual life were saying about the dangers of precisely this sort of thing.

Such a misinterpretation of mysticism was made inevitable by the very nature of Baroque art. Given the style in which they worked, the artists of the seventeenth century could not have treated the theme in any other way. And, oddly enough, even at times when the current style permitted a treatment of the less epileptic aspects of religion, no fully adequate rendering of the contemplative life was ever achieved in the plastic arts of Christendom. The peace that passes all understanding was often sung and spoken; it was hardly ever painted or carved. Thus, in the writings of St. Bernard, of Albertus Magnus, of Eckhart and Tauler and Ruysbroeck one may find passages that express very clearly the nature and significance of mystical contemplation. But the saints who figure in medieval painting and sculpture tell us next to nothing about this anticipation of the beatific vision. There are no equivalents of those Far Eastern Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who incarnate, in stone and paint, the experience of ultimate reality. Moreover the Christian saints have their being in a world from which non-human Nature (that mine of supernatural beauties and transcendent significances) has been almost completely excluded. In his handbook on painting Cennino Cennini gives a recipe for mountains. Take some large jagged stones, arrange them on a table, draw them and, lo and behold, you will have a range of Alps or Apennines good enough for all the practical purposes of art. In China and Japan mountains were taken more seriously. The aspiring artist was advised to go and live

among them, to make himself alertly passive in their presence, to contemplate them lovingly until he could understand the mode of their being and feel within them the workings of the immanent and transcendent Tao. As one might have expected, the medieval artists of Christendom painted mere backgrounds, whereas those of the Far East painted landscapes that are the equivalent of mystical poetry—formally perfect renderings of man's experience of being related to the Order of Things.

This experience is, of course, perfectly private, non-historical and unsocial. That is why, to the organizers of Churches and the exponents of salvation through the State, it has always seemed suspect, shady and even indecent. And yet, like sex and pain and death, there it remains, one of the brute facts with which, whether we like them or not, we have to come to terms. Maddeningly, unbearably, an occasional artist rubs our noses in his rendering of these facts. Confronted by the pornographies of suffering, of sensuality, of dissolution, by 'The Disasters of War' and *The Naked and the Dead*, by *Tropic of Cancer*, by *Ivan Ilyitch*, and even (despite their ludicrous sublimity) by the Baroque tombs, we shrink and are appalled. And in another way there is something hardly less appalling in the pornographies (as many good rationalists regard them) of mysticism. Even the consolations of religion and philosophy are pretty desolating for the average sensual man, who clings to his ignorance as the sole guarantee of happiness. *Terribilis mors conturbat me*; but so does *terribilis Vita*.

AUGUSTUS JOHN

# FRAGMENTS OF AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY—XVIII

THE Boer War was on. Things weren't going well (for us). Old gentlemen in clubs and pubs were shaking their heads with sad misgiving. Our neighbours across the Channel were jubilant, for the British Lion was being worried to death by a small community of out-of-date Dutch farmers. Perfidious Albion appeared to be getting the worst of it. Was the Empire's civilizing mission to cease, and were we to relinquish the goldfields? But we weren't done yet. The music halls, those true-blue temples of Patriotism, were more crowded than ever. 'Old Kroojer' with his Bible, was a gift from the gods to the lowest of low comedians. The Lion could still roar, and Kipling had provided him with a special hymn for the occasion. Dukes', cooks' and belted Earls' sons were buckling on their armour and rushing to the field but, alas! they were apt to fall almost as soon as they got out there. The cowardly Boers could shoot, and after potting our men from behind kopjes, were off again like greased lightning. We couldn't get near the bastards. And then came Mafeking. I strolled down to Trafalgar Square to see the fun. The Square, the Strand, and every adjacent avenue were packed with a seething mass of citizens, celebrating the great day in a style that would have made an Australian blackfellow blush. Mad with drink and tribal hysteria, the patriots formed themselves into solid phalanxes, and plunging at random this way and that, swept all before them. The women, foremost in this mêlée, danced like maenads, their shrill catcalls swelling the general hullabaloo. Feeling out of place and rather scared, I extricated myself from pandemonium with some difficulty, and crept home in a state of dejection. What was the matter with me? I admit I was a 'Pro-Boer', that is, averse to a war of aggression, still, wasn't I an Englishman—of a sort?

Proper old-fashioned 'savages' don't behave like this. They have their rituals and dances: an Australian corroboree is a miracle of precision and order; everybody is in it (except the women and children), and it goes on all night; thus they express and work off

their communal exuberance—artistically and with decorum. But ‘mafficking’ only brings to light the devilry and filth we pretend to have forgotten, and points to a deep slough in our way, which we have never yet filled up or drained, and can only traverse by a precarious duckboard, joining the margins of a civilization, itself founded in the swamp, though its pinnacles may, as you say, reach upward to the stars.

I don’t propose to dwell on that tough but comparatively insignificant struggle which enriched our language with the new and ugly word I have made use of above, nor discuss the merits of the combatants, except to observe that Boer and Briton turn out, in fact, to have had much in common. The biblical tradition which they shared had imbued both with the same bestial cruelty to inferior, that is to say, less well-armed, races. The former extirpated the Bushmen like vermin (there are only one or two left), and the latter made a still more thorough job of the Tasmanians, besides devastating a vast multitude of other interesting and inoffensive populations. The differences are only quantitative. A young Australian I met the other day reminds me of these horrors. I had mentioned the aborigines of his country: ‘Oh, them,’ he said with a grin, ‘my grandfather used to go out every morning and shoot half a dozen before breakfast’.

Hitler, of course, was supreme in this line, working on a so much grander scale. No wonder he has so many admirers in this country. Without referring to his anti-Semitic campaign, I want to draw attention to a smaller and less advertised operation, which was also carried out with great efficiency; I refer to his drive against the gypsies. By employing the new scientific techniques, these Indo-Aryan hedge-crawlers were, in the Reich, very largely reduced in numbers, but, in Poland, they were completely exterminated. In the latter country, I am assured, not a single specimen of these ‘anti-social pests’ remains alive! In Great Britain the problem is attacked from a different angle, with results less drastic and spectacular, but in the long run, equally effective though not so neat. It is the *spirit* we go for first. ‘Harry the Gypsies’ is the political slogan, and ‘Move on’ the word of command. I don’t know what department of our Government is responsible for the present fresh outburst of activity in the cause of law and order: I doubt if it is strictly lawful or orderly, but it is certain that the police perform their duties with diligence, though, I am glad to

think, not always without compunction; they are, after all, Englishmen, and so, not insensible to the spectacle of animals in distress. . . . This routine of bloodless persecution soon wears down the powers of resistance, both of the gypsies and their horses, and they gravitate inevitably to the already overcrowded slums, where, cut off from their traditional ways of life, they quickly degenerate and become absorbed in the general squalor. Before long there will be no dark strangers encamped in the green lane, and, as somebody remarked, our children will be the poorer. There will be, it is true, plenty of respectable motor-drawn caravaners, but that isn't quite the same thing, is it?



Jimmy M. was a boy of about twelve when we met him. He wore auburn corkscrew curls down to his shoulders, and his costume was of old green velvet. His face was rather pale and beautiful. Jimmy stood on the sands at Tenby, where he made fairy structures of coloured paper, which he would cleverly snip and manipulate into changing forms, each more surprising than the last. Everybody applauded the sweet boy with his candid smiling eyes and pennies were produced in quantities: these his mother collected. Soon we made friends with Jimmy, and invited him to our house to be drawn and painted. His mother would come, too. Our father didn't approve of these strollers but, as usual, had to give way before our insistence. Our studio was an attic under the roof. Here we worked with Jimmy and only wished his mother wouldn't come. Perhaps she wasn't his mother, for there was no earthly resemblance between the two, and I know such boys may be hired at Manchester or somewhere. I met another one in a strange town where we had encamped. I was exploring this town when I heard a voice uplifted to the accompaniment of a mechanical piano: as I approached I saw it was the voice of a boy who stood singing by the side of the instrument, which was turned by a dark, bearded man. The boy had long flaxen hair like a girl's, and was dressed in a sailor suit. His voice, of an unearthly quality, quite dominated the tinkling piano; he had the face of a gothic angel. When I got to know this boy I found he was sweet and gentle, but witless. It seems they can be hired, such boys, or even bought, like performing bears or monkeys.

My sister was always picking up beautiful children to draw and adore. In those days she was full of high spirits, though she had her attacks of melancholy too. Nobody suffered from frustrated love as she did. When she joined me at the Slade we shared rooms together, rooms which we constantly changed. We lived solely on fruit and nuts, a regime to which I had been converted and easily persuaded her to follow suit. I would have liked to influence her as effectively towards a more positive and athletic attitude to life, for her devotion to art, it seemed to me, was accompanied quite unnecessarily by an unbecoming and unhealthy self-neglect; the very opposite to my own tendencies, which were at that time of a thoroughly robust and even muscular order—not that I took the slightest interest in 'sport' or any form of organized games, but on my own, loved to put my powers of endurance to the test, and practised acrobatics in private. Women, too, I thought, should cultivate their physique, though not ostentatiously, and also attire themselves with grace and dignity without bothering about the fashion too much. One of my sister's unhappy crossings-in-love led up to the following drama. She had a great friend at the Slade, a certain girl student whom I will call Elinor. Elinor had formed a close attachment to an outsider. This young man was a curious fellow, giving himself the airs of a superman with pretensions to near immortality, but apparently only occupied for the present in some form of business. Gwen decided that this affair must be stopped. Accordingly, after failing to persuade her friend to break it off, she announced her ultimatum—surrender or suicide. I strongly disapproved of all this: Elinor's disposal of her affections was, in this case, possibly regrettable, but, in my opinion, none of our business. The atmosphere of our group now became almost unbearable, with its frightful tension, its terrifying excursions and alarms. Had my sister gone mad? At one moment Ambrose McEvoy thought so, and, distraught himself, rushed to tell me the dire news: but Gwen was only in a state of spiritual exaltation and laughed at me as I threw myself into her arms. . . . But Elinor, her former love for Gwen now turned to hate, remained immovable. I saw there was only one thing to be done. It was up to me to confront her lover and order him to depart or fight. . . . We met. I explained the situation and pronounced my terms. To my surprise, this superman was beaten without a blow: he crumpled up and finally agreed to quit the field and go back to his wife:

nothing could have been more ignominious—and satisfactory! The immorality of my action was justified. The drama was ended, with the protagonists alive though sadly exhausted and distressed as the curtain fell.

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Evans, McEvoy and I were frequent patrons of the music halls, which still retained some of their pristine character and charm. Nowadays the cockney accent is considered to be exquisitely funny in itself—I mean stage cockney. Well, it isn't; it's merely unpleasant. It is now a false convention, like slanting Chinese eyes, which don't exist. But a few of the old cockney comedians were accomplished artists with a technique and style we, or at least I, don't meet with now. We used also to attend Anarchist meetings in the Fitzroy quarter. Though many of the speakers were foreigners, their eloquence was none the less impressive, for they spoke with feeling. We always had our sketchbooks handy. This circumstance once caused us to be mistaken for police spies and there was some murmuring. More than once I listened to the voice of Peter Kropotkin. The great and tireless champion of Freedom, correctly attired in his revolutionary frock-coat, beamed on his audience with the true *rayonnement* of goodness, courage and faith. In him these qualities, supported by the authority of a scholar, joined in condemnation of society, based, it would appear, on corrupt and insecure foundations: this student of Dante, geographer, anthropologist and historian, pointed the way to a new social order with its roots in the Commune, the fertile bed from which had sprung, in medieval times, those flowers of civilization, the Free City and the Gothic church. But for this a new mythology must be conceived, embodying a re-statement of the Brotherhood of Man, the obliteration of national frontiers and an end to the State. . . . Louise Michel, 'The Red Virgin', who, attired as a man, had herself fought at the barricades, appeared one evening on the platform. The little old lady in black made a dramatic figure as, in prophecy, she thrust out a lean and accusatory claw. Gwen and I once attended a party organized for the benefit of one, David Nichols, a *colporteur* of Anarchist literature, including the journal *Freedom*. During the evening 'The Carmagnole' was sung and danced, or at least a version of it. When Nichols volunteered a recitation from Swinburne, I found his cockney accent a trifle out of keeping

with this poet's style, and the intensity of emotion he strained after, not strictly appropriate or necessary. Later, Nichols was found starved to death in his cellar: but *Freedom* goes on.

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Gwen's talent and originality were not unrecognized at the Slade. The deep feeling, acute characterization, restraint and gravity of her work, suggest to me an affinity with the early Flemish School.

On leaving the Slade, my sister, after various moves, established herself in a basement or cellar in Howland Street. I disagreed with her in this choice of lodging, which appeared to me in every way undesirable both for living and painting in, but I failed to convince her of this error of judgement. Fortunately, however, her sojourn in the cellar did not last long, for soon after she decided to go to Paris, where Whistler at this time ran a School of Painting, which she joined together with her fellow students, Gwen Salmon and Ida Nettleship. Here she acquired that methodicity which she was to develop to a point of elaboration undreamt of by her master; eventually she made the acquaintance of Rodin, who was to figure so predominantly and yet so obscurely in her life. He admired and acclaimed her gifts. '*Vous êtes bel artiste*', were the words she reported to me with natural elation. She used to pose for Rodin, for she had, he said, '*un corps admirable*'. Commissioned by the Society of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers to execute a memorial to Whistler, Rodin produced a colossal figure for which my sister posed, holding a medallion of the painter. This was rejected by the Society on the advice of the late Derwent Wood, on the grounds of an unfinished arm, and instead, a replica of the '*Bourgeois de Calais*' was erected on the Embankment. Nothing could be less suitable! On the other hand, the figure designed for the purpose (in spite of the uncompleted arm) would have been a superb and appropriate monument to the painter. I came upon it, neglected, in a shed in the grounds of the Musée Biron, now renamed Musée Rodin, where numerous other studies of my sister have recently been discovered by her nephew, Edwin. A mass of documents found after her death include correspondence, extracts from devotional and other works, and an abundance of notes and meditations. I shall quote some of these, in their somewhat

faulty French, as they afford first-hand clues to her life and character. Rodin's brief letters which remain are always affectionate, but constantly express his concern for her well-being and his dissatisfaction with a mode of living which he judged to be contrary to the rules of health: '*Il faudrait changer de chambre que est trop humide et n'a pas de soleil.*' '*Soignez-vous, parceque vous êtes pale.*' '*Vous avez de grandes facultés de sentir et de penser.*' '*Cette lettre pour vous dire de faire toujours vos promenades, et de bien vous soigner car nous poserons bientôt.*' '*Je vous prie, chère amie de ne pas vous rendre malade.*' '*Je suis parti à Marseilles pour 6 jours: faites ma petite amie des lettres que vous m'enverrez. Mangez bien car il me semble que vous vous negligez. C'est ce qui vous donne mal à la tête. Je me reposera le plus que je pourrai.*' '*Courage, petite amie; moi, je suis si fatigué et vieux . . . mais j'aime votre petit coeur si dévoué, patience et pas de violence.*' Rodin himself appears to be often *enrhumé, grippé* or *fatigué*.

Gwen's friendship with Rainer Maria Rilke was also warm and close. The poet used to lend her books and help her with his sympathy and understanding. Jacques Maritain was a neighbour at Meudon. Gwen always addressed him as 'Dear Master'. The brilliant Neo-Thomist adopted a highly authoritative tone in his communications with Gwen and enjoins complete obedience, which his pupil is only too eager to render. Exercising his English, he writes: 'Your answer is too much conceit, I don't know what you wrote at more length at first, and I am regretting you don't have sent me your first writing, since I've ordered you to tell me long and entirely what your mind finds about that subject. I'm sole judge of my orders and your sole duty is to obey me. . . .

Maritain's niece, Mademoiselle Véra Oumançoff, becomes also an outstanding object of Gwen's devotion. Innumerable letters or drafts of letters addressed to this young lady display a startling mixture of romantic sentiment and Catholic piety. Mademoiselle Véra appears to have been what we call a 'sensible girl' and seeks to curb her admirer's extravagances. She might as well have tried to restrain a whirlwind. '*Avez-vous réellement besoin de m'écrire presque tous les jours? Je ne le crois pas—et je crois même que c'est très mauvais pour votre âme—car vous vous attachez trop à une créature, sans même la connaître pour ainsi dire.*' '*Je sais bien que vous avez une grande sensibilité, mais il faut la tourner vers Notre Seigneur, vers la Sainte Vierge.*' Mademoiselle Véra disapproved of Gwen's practice of

drawing in church. Gwen to Vera: 'Vous avez dit que vous ne trouvez pas que c'est un très grand péché de travailler en esprit à mes dessins pendant la grande Messe. Monsieur le Curé m'a dit que c'est un péché. Alors vous m'avez dit doucement, s'il a dit cela, c'est un péché. Quand M. le Curé me l'a dit je n'ai senti ni contrition ni peur... mais je ne dessinerais qu'aux Vêpres, Saluts et les Retraites. J'aime prier à l'Église comme tout le monde, mais mon esprit n'est pas capable de prier longtemps à la fois. . . . Les orphelins habillés avec ces chapeaux noirs au ruban blanc et leurs robes noires aux collets blancs me charment et des autres créatures me charment à l'Église. Si je retranche tout cela il n'y aurait pas assez de bonheur dans ma vie.'

A moment of revolt: 'Le soir est venu: j'ai été encore malheureuse et je ne peux rien finir, même ma toilette ou la chambre. Je vais à la campagne chercher mon chat. Vous avez dit que je laisse les gens sérieux comme Miss O'Donnell pour courir après des chimères. Oui, vous et elle sont trop sérieuses pour moi. Je n'ai plus envie de vivre. Je n'ai pas envie d'aller chercher le chat. . . . Vous êtes toujours injuste. Vous avez montré de l'impolitesse dans l'atelier et dans la rue. . . .'

But now friendly again: 'Chère Mademoiselle Véra, je ne vous ai pas indiqué clairement le chemin à la forêt. Le voici: vous traverserez la Place de l'Observatrix (en sortant de l'Avenue Jacques Minot), et vous prenez la rue des Capucines; vous monterez alors la première rue à gauche qui vous mènera à la forêt. Après que vous avez marché la quelques minutes vous pouvez entrer sous les taillis à votre droit et vous trouvez des clochettes bleus.'

★ ★ ★

'Je ne peux pas vous dire comment il est étrange de vous entendre parler de mes dessins. . . . Si vous les trouvez malfaits, dites le moi et je changerai de manière comme je changerais mes vêtements s'ils vous agacent.'

★ ★ ★

'Vous m'avez dit que ma lettre était trop longue. Trop longue pour quoi? Je pense que les âmes dans le Pourgatoire doivent souffrir un peu comme moi. Je ne vis pas tranquillement comme vous et tout le monde. Quand vous me quittez, pour vous il y aura demain et après demain. Tous les jours de la semaine enfin, et en effet c'est cela qui arrive. Pour

*moi c'est le dernier jour. Je ne vois pas d'autres; je ne regarde pas en avant. . . Je suis bizarre.*

\* \* \*

*'Chère Mademoiselle, j'ai besoin de vos yeux mais le miens ne veulent pas les regarder. Je leur ai dit de les regarder mais ils ne veulent pas le faire. Je vous aime comme j'aime les fleurs.*

\* \* \*

*'On a de la tendresse pour les petits animaux qu'on a sauvé de la mort, n'est-ce-pas? Vous devez avoir tendresse pour moi parce que vous m'avez sauvé de la mort. . . '*

\* \* \*

Here is a letter from a child, which I fancy Gwen found more satisfactory than those of Mademoiselle Véra. *'Orrevoir Mademoiselle Mary je vous remerssie bien je vous donne un gros baisé. Je vous remercie de vos petits fleurs je vous embrassé de tout mon coeur vous etes assez bonne pour moi. Edith Brouyer.'*

\* \* \*

Gwen has occasion to criticize le Curé de Meudon, who thought it a sin to draw in church. *'Monsieur le Curé, a en outre, fait enlever les tableaux des Stations du Chemin qui étaient simples et de belle coloris et les a remplacés par ceux que vous connaissez. (J'ai demandé à Mlle P. si elle les trouvait beaux, les nouveaux, et elle disait : "Non, ils sont plutôt fines").'*

\* \* \*

*'Monsieur le Curé nous prends de trop bas. C'est désagréable d'être pris de trop bas. Quand nous allons en promenade en Mai, dans le train, en autobus et au déjeuner et à gouter, Monsieur le Curé croit nécessaire de nous faire rire. Il faut adapter ses histoires sans doute à l'esprit le plus bas: ca serait difficile d'être aussi grossière et bête que Suzanne, n'est-ce-pas?'*

\* \* \*

From a letter to a friend: 'Dear Nona, my mind is suffering often with regrets that hurt me and other thoughts that hurt me

and sometimes fears, and suddenly I hear your word, "My dear, dear Gwen." Nona, what angel made you say it? Nona, when you look at me so thoughtfully and write to me you don't know what you do. In Brittany at night I used to pluck the leaves and grasses from the hedges all dark and misty and when I took them home I sometimes found my hands full of flowers. Nona, you are like a sculptor who models the clay in his hands without thinking and suddenly he finds a lovely form.'

★ ★ ★

From a letter to me: 'I told you in a letter long ago that I am happy. When illness or death do not intervene, I am. Not many people can say as much. I do not lead a subterranean life (my subterranean life was in Howland Street). Even in respect to numbers I know and see many more people that I have ever. (Some of my friendships are nothing to be proud of by-the-bye.) It was in London I saw nobody. If in a café I gave you the impression that I am too much alone, it was an accident. I was thinking of you and your friends and that I should like to go to spectacles and cafés with you often. If to "return to life" is to live as I did in London, *merci Monsieur!* There are people like plants who cannot flourish in the cold, and I want to flourish. Excuse the length and composition of this letter. It is from a little animal groping in the dark. . . . When you want to paint me you had better name a time to come and see me in several clothes—I have two hats for instance.'

★ ★ ★

Some notes from Gwen John's papers:  
May 1921

'*Travail immédiat, même mauvais, vaut mieux que la réverie.* Baudelaire.'

★ ★ ★

July 1923

'You are free only when you have left all. Leave everybody and let them leave you. Then only will you be without fear.'

★ ★ ★

April 1927

'I accept to suffer always but Rilke! hold my hand! You must hold me by the hand! Teach me, inspire me, make me know what to do. Take care of me when my mind is asleep. You began to help me, you must continue.'

★ ★ ★

Pentecost 1932

'Don't think (as before) to work for years ahead—and the numbers possible—you work for one moment.'

★ ★ ★

*'Mon cœur est comme une mer qui a des petites vagues tristes, mais toutes les neuvième vagues sont grandes et heureuses.'*

★ ★ ★

'Are you fortified with a new hope and thought if again the cloud descended upon you?'

★ ★ ★

'Don't be afraid of falling into mediocrity—you would never.'

★ ★ ★

'Do not be vague or wavering. Impose your style. Let it be simple and strong. The short strong stalks of flowers. . . .'

★ ★ ★

In these scraps from my sister's notes and letters there is little evidence of her native gaiety and humour. They belong for the most part to a period of emotional stress and torment. Gwen John's apparent timidity and evasiveness disguised a lofty pride and an implacable will. When possessed by one of the 'Demons' of whose intrusions she sometimes complained, she was capable of a degree of exaltation combined with ruthlessness which, like a pointed pistol, compelled surrender: but the pistol would be

pointed at herself. . . . Heroism knows no scruples. Though she tried to cultivate the '*sainte indifference*' recommended by some of her spiritual guides, success on these lines was hardly to be expected while such a heart as hers continued to beat. She may have derived some moments of peace, consolation or ecstasy besides much anguish of mind from the religion she had embraced with such fervour: but the discovery that pious people can be just as stupid, insensitive and vulgar as anybody else was inevitable and tragic. It is evident that, while a member of the religious community of Meudon, she remains, as far as they were concerned, completely alone; a lost soul but for the clairvoyance and sympathy of such people as Rilke and 'Nona'. Deciding at last to leave Rue Terre Neuve ('*cette maison est si humide; les murs suintent et des petits ruisseaux coulent des murs des escaliers*'), she established herself in Rue Babie, still at Meudon, in a kind of hangar surrounded by a terrain, containing trees and shrubs. But the sea was necessary to her, and frequent visits to Brittany were determined by this need. At last, feeling the old compulsion upon her, she took the train to Dieppe, but on arrival collapsed. Taken to the hospital, in a short while she expired. She had neglected to bring any baggage with her, but, as it turned out, had not forgotten to make provision for her cats.

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PLATE I

## DEATH AND THE BAROQUE

### PLATE I

Monument to Maria Camilla Pallavicino in  
the Church of Saint Francesco a Ripa, Rome

### PLATE II

Tomb of Dr. John Donne. St. Paul's Cathedral, London  
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PLATE II

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